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From the door, opening towards the east, one enters into the interior of temple. The interior is divided into three functional parts. The mandap that measures 5.97 x 4.90 square metres occupies the eastern part. It has a large-sized projected window supported on the brackets towards the south. The ornate ceiling of the mandap is supported on the six wooden pillars. Four of them, of the original construction, describe a square formation, which encloses the most interesting and ornate ceiling. Two pillars of smaller section on the west side, opposite to the sanctum, are the later addition. Towards the West is the square sanctum that measures 2.22 metres square from inside and 3.16 metres square externally. An 87 centimetres wide ambulatory surrounds it from the three sides.

This temple is roofed in a very curious manner, which does not conform to the any known type of roofing design. Nevertheless, its arrangement is nearest to the canopied composite roofed temple-type. The roof over the mandap is a high-pitched gable-type, which has been continued over the sanctum and ambulatory to form, what may be described as, an almost vertically sliced pyramid. The pinnacle of this pyramid rises higher over the ridge of the roof in front. The roof is covered with the deodar wood planks. The reason for such a strange form of roofing may be that, when the earlier temple was enlarged subsequently in CE 1569-70, the artisans might have tried to retain the roofing design of the earlier smaller temple, which comprised only the sanctum and the mandap, defined by the original four pillars. In that attempt, neither could they replicate the original roof-design nor could they evolve any other suitable design of their own.

This strange-looking roofing arrangement provokes one pertinent question in the context of a tradition that the Markula temple was a work of the master, who in CE 1553 had built the temple of Hidimba at Dhungri (Manali). Goetz (The Early Wooden Temples of Chamba, pp. 91-100) has validated that tradition by bringing in the matrimonial relationship between Pratap Singh (CE 1558-1582), ruler of Chamba, and Bahadur Singh of Kullu (ca. CE 1532-1559). However, that tradition may be true only to the extent of similarity in some of the woodcarvings, but do not hold good for the construction of this temple as a whole. For, how could a master-builder of Hidimba temple reconcile with such a clumsy roof over the Markula Devi temple, the like of which is found nowhere else?

The exterior part and the roofing structure of the present temple probably belong to the late 16th century, when it might have been rebuilt to house the present crude image of Mahishasuramardini, which carries a late Sharda inscription on its

pedestal of about CE 1569-70. The inscription states that it was cast by one Panjamanak Jinak from Bhadarwah in the shastra (?) year 4645 (which corresponds to CE 1569-70) and dedicated by Thakur Himapal. The original form of this temple-structure that existed then may not be known, because the 16th century structure also underwent many repairs, and perhaps changes as well. Of those repairs or restorations, one is well recorded on a stone slab inscription in Bhoti of about 17th century (refer J. Ph. Vogel, Antiquities of Chamba State, New Delhi, reprint 1994, pp. 267-268).

This temple in its original form possibly had a multi-tiered pyramidal roof, similar to that of the Hidimba temple at Dhungri (Manali), if the popular tradition associated with this temple is to be relied upon, but that tradition is of dubious nature. Most likely, that roof also should not have been much different from the original 8th century two-tiered pyramidal type prototype, with an extended gable roof over the mandap, generally similar to the one of Shiva temple at Pandrethan, as replicated on the registers above the sanctum door.

The original 8th century structure of the Markula Devi might have been much smaller one in the high Kashmiri architectural style, much similar to its senior counterparts at Chitrari and Brahmaur in their original forms. It only consisted of a sanctum and a mandap between the four pillars. The exquisite woodcarvings of that period, with very fluent and deep chisel work covering very minutely every inch of the exposed woodwork of the façade of sanctum, pillars and the ceiling of mandap, overwhelm the mind.

The façade of sanctum, reflecting the influence of Kashmiri art and architectural traditions, is the richest and most interesting part of the temple. Each of the outermost pair of jambs is divided into three arched niches of varying sizes and forms. The niches at the bottom are supported by the Yakshas, standing in the minuscule vertical niches flanked by the lions, separated by the slender pillars. These typically Kashmiri niches, set vertically, enshrine Ganga on the left, standing gracefully on a crocodile, holding in her four hands a ghanta, rosary, book and a long-stalked lotus. She is standing in the tri-bhang mudra. The corresponding niche on the right shows Yamuna on a tortoise in the identical tri-bhanga mudra and with the similar objects -- ghanta, rosary, book and a long-stalked lotus -- in her four hands. In the middle niches on both sides, possibly four armed male guardians, one in each, are shown standing holding a lance, lotus, kamandalu and the fourth hand resting on the hip. On the top is a dominating kirtimukh, spouting forth sprays of

foliage. The niches at the top, with curvifoliate lintel, enclose four-armed heavy-built male figures, each holding different objects in their hands.

Next is a convex band. It is made of lotus petals, tied with the strings of beads into an elaborate wreath. This band continues from left to right along the connecting register. Inset in this band is a small rosette after every three bunches of the tied petals, followed by a narrow bevelled strip of the louts-petal garland, which also continues from left along the corresponding register to the right.

The next pair is dominated by the dashavatar theme -- the ten incarnations of Vishnu – five on each side, enclosed in the deep niches. The four lower niches are covered with the cusped arches, formed by the intricate scrollwork. However, the top ones are covered with straight arches and capped by the triangular crowns. In these niches, on the left, from bottom upwards are Matsya, Narasimh, Vaman, Krishna and Buddha, and on the right in the similar order are Kurm, Varah, Parshuram, Ram and Kalki avataras. All these avataras are equipped with their characterising attributes.

Further inwards on the both sides are the round bands. These are formed by the beaded rings, looking like the twists of a rope, piled one above the other.

The inner pairs of jambs are divided vertically into four oval niches, enclosed by the creepers on each side. Danseuses in different dancing postures are shown in these niches. The registers, resting over the jambs, form independent part of the facade. The top-most register comprises five miniature niche-shrines, three of them are topped with ogival vaults, similar to the early Buddhist chaitya halls of the mainland, and the two intervening ones are with the two-tiered pyramidal Kashmiri superstructure. The lower register is also treated in the same manner as the upper one, but there are only three niches, two pyramidal on the sides and the one ogival in the centre. In these eight niches, eight grahas are enshrined. These, from top left, are Brihaspati, Shukra, Budh, Rahu and Ketu. In the lower register are Mangal, Chandra and Shani. Surya occupies a central position on the lintel at the bottom. Thus, the grahas are configured in an inverted pyramidal form. Flanking Surya, are the Gandharvs, two on each side. The doorframe proper is adorned the with graceful curvifoliate scrollwork.

The ceiling over mandap, confined to the area defined by the four pillars, is composed of the nine quadrate panels. Eight of these are arranged on the sides, four of these are the square corner panels, each measuring 70 centimetres square. Each of these square panels carries usual multi-petalled open lotus device. The four rectangular ones are fitted in between the square corner panels. Of these, the northern and southern panels measure 2.50 x 0.70 metres square in size and the

eastern and western panels measure 2.30 x 0.70 metres square. The ninth one is the central panel with an elaborate lantern ceiling. It is the largest one that measures 2.50 x 2.30 metres square. All these panels are richly carved in high relief, with stress on the detailed treatment of each figure, device and motif.

Each of the four square corner panels that define the extremity of the original ceiling within the four pillars carries multi-petalled open lotus flower. The multi-petalled open lotus has been one of the most popular devices to embellish ceilings in most of the temples in the region. We find its profuse use in Shakti Devi temple at Chitrari and in Lakshana Devi temple at Brahmaur and in innumerable wooden temple of the later period. Here, this device has been carved in high relief in a very delicate manner.

Of the four rectangular panels, the eastern one is divided into four squarish sub-panels. In each of them, a Gandharva couple is shown seated on a lotus cushions. Below these Gandharva panels, in a large register in the middle are the musicians playing on different musical instruments. This register is separated from the corner panels by the two square panels, one on each side with the inset lotus rosettes. In each of these corner panels, pairs of danseuses are depicted.

The southern rectangular panel is also divided into four squarish sub-panels. In each of the two inner sub-panels, six armed Gandharva is shown performing puja by pouring water over a lingam, placed on an altar resting on the back of a bull seated couchant on a lotus seat. In each of the two outer panels, a Gandharva is depicted playing on a stringed musical instrument, may be the bow-harp or the Kinnar-vina. All the Gandharvas are accompanied by their spouses. In the lower register, sixteen tiny musicians and dancers are depicted in action.

The western rectangular ceiling panel is divided into two unequal registers. The upper, larger one depicts the fourteen-armed Natraj Shiv. To his left is the ten armed Gauri. Both are performing dance, accompanied by the Shiv-parivar and the diminutive Nandi. In the lower narrower register, thirteen dwarf gans are shown dancing and rejoicing.

The northern rectangular panel is thematically different to the three aforementioned ones. In it, the Buddha is shown seated in the bhumisparsha mudra in the adamantine posture. The young daughters of Mar and their voluptuous damsels are engaged to distract him from his penance by singing and dancing. The demons around are trying to topple his vajra-asan (diamond seat), symbolised by a vajra under his seat. To the left, Mar, standing on his chariot, is shown shooting

arrows at the meditating Buddha, while on the right; he is shown defeated, having exhausted his energy. He is being consoled by his maids.

The central and the largest panel are divided into nine sectors. Eight of these are triangular ones, and the one at the centre is a quadrate panel. Of the eight triangular ones, the four larger ones form the triangular corner panels, abutting on the outer rectangles. These depict stylised makars in the swirling waters. The other smaller four triangular panels define the central smaller quadrate part. In these smaller triangles, stylised kirtimukhas, spouting forth sprays of floral extravaganza, are depicted. Centrepiece of the lantern ceiling is the magnificent lotus rosette, thematically identical to its counterparts in the temples of Shiv-Shakti (Chitrari) and Lakshana Devi (Brahmaur), and it may find a subtle stylistic similarity with similar device at Pandrethan in Kashmir, but here it is in a very high relief. The striking vajravali (vajra border) is an additional element in the ceiling of this Vajravarahi temple. The circular vajra border and the stylised petalled lotus are decidedly innovative. These may suggest that the artisans at that stage were still progressively experimenting and evolving new patterns. The influence of esoteric Buddhist tradition is evident in the treatment of the whole rosette composition, which appears to be inspired by the esoteric mandal concept. The outermost rim is formed of the stylised flames, called mehi-hKhor-lo in the esoteric Tibetan Buddhism. This circle of flames (mehi-hKhor-lo) symbolises essential primordial nature of the universe. Within this flaming circle is the impregnable wall of the vajra, i.e., the thunderbolt. This is known as the rDo-rje-Ra-ba in the esoteric Tibetan Buddhism. Within this vajravali may be seen the stylised lotus petals in a slender ring, forming a wall of the lotus petals, i.e., pad-mahi Ra-ba of the Tibetan Buddhism. Within this wall is a fully blown open lotus flower. It enshrines within it the pious gem, thus, uniting the gem and the lotus together to explain the Buddhist creedal mantra of Om Mani padme hum. The four deities, depicted on the four spandrels on the corners within the bounding square, may represent the guardian deities of the four quarters. They are shown holding the mandal in position by stretching their arms and legs. This depiction essentially conforms to the concept of Buddhist mandal. The whole composition is important, for it may signify the association of this temple with the Buddhist Vajra deity, which in this case had originally been Marichi Vajravarahi (Tibetan: rDor-Je Pag-mo). In this context, equally interesting may be the vajra motif under the diamond seat of Buddha seating in the ceiling panel on the northern side, noted a short while before.

Except for the three Buddhist themes, i.e., the central mandal ceiling panel, the 'Assault of Mar' on the northern rectangular panel of the ceiling, chaitya-like form on the ornate facade, and the ancient tradition of Marichi Vajravarahi, there now remains nothing of the anterior Buddhist association in this temple of Mahishasuramardini.

Of the six pillars in mandap, the four defining the ornate ceiling, belong to the original temple structure. The two closer to the entrance of the sanctum are the later additions. The treatment of original four pillars is essentially similar to the ones in Lakshana Devi temple at Brahmaur, but these lack the grace and verve of their prototypes. Each of these pillars, with square section (ruchika-form) of its plain shaft, rests on square base with cushion and fillet moulding. The ruchika shaft takes the circular (vritta) form near the capital, where it is treated with the alternate use of the ringed bands and angular friezes. Over that arrangement, rests the ornate ghat-pallav (pot-and-foliage) capital on a circular-ring base. The capital is superseded by a square and profusely ornate abacus.

In the late 16th century, when Thakur Himapal installed an image of Mahishasuramardini in this temple, some woodcarving work was also done. Among those carvings, are the two dwarpals standing against the front wall of sanctum on the corners and the carvings done on the architrave. On the eastern side in this architrave, episodes from the Mahabharat are depicted and on the western side, scenes from the Sundarakand and Yuddhakand of the Ramayan are carved. The architrave on the northern side depicts an episode of the Adiparv of the Mahabharat centred on the svayambar of Draupadi. On the southern side, on the both sides of large widow, are the large relief panels of Trivikram Vishnu (Vaman Avatar) on the eastern side and the scene of samudra-manthan (the Churning of Ocean) on the western side.

From a dedicatory inscription in Bhoti, discovered at this place, it is revealed that this temple (monastery) was renovated by a Buddhist devotee sometimes around the beginning of 17th century. Possibly, the entrance room and store towards the eastern end, roofed with flat mud roof are the additions of that time. These rooms in the roofing style of the Buddhist trans-Himalayan tract might have been added to the earlier structure to provide accommodation for the monks, for which there existed no provision in the earlier structure. The attendant's room, attached to the existing structure at the lower terrace is certainly an addition of recent times.

In July 1989, the author discovered a wooden image of Mahishasuramardini in the heap of debris behind the altar during one of may explorations. That image might have remained under worship for centuries until CE 1569-70, when Thakur Himapal replaced that with the brass image, now on the altar. For, a faint radiance of vermilion, permeated deeper into the grains of wood on the forehead, could be noted after the image was treated and cleaned. The bottom middle portion of the image had become charred under the thermal effect of burning dhoop and deep through the centuries.

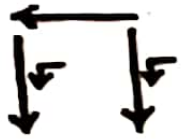
That image, now in the State Museum at Shimla, is simple in ornamentation, but fully identifies in anatomy, iconography and style with the idol of Lakshana Devi, and it may appear to predate the bronze image of Lakshana, for the treatment of this wooden image is far more dynamic, vigorous and forceful, yet serene and unpretentious. Possibly, Gugga, the master-craftsman of the Brahmpur atelier, used this wooden image as a prototype for the brass image of Lakshana Devi, in which he could incorporate numerous additional decorative elements, because the metal casting offers better workability for the detailed treatment than wood. That may also follow that a wooden temple (or a shrine) already existed at village Markul for this wooden image before Meruvarman (ca. CE 680-700) built wooden temples at Chitrari or Brahmpur. However, this is at best a conjecture until it is borne out by the definite evidences.

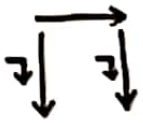
A New Variety of Mah'deva Type Silver Coins from a Recently Discovered Hoard from Himachal Pradesh

Devendra Handa*

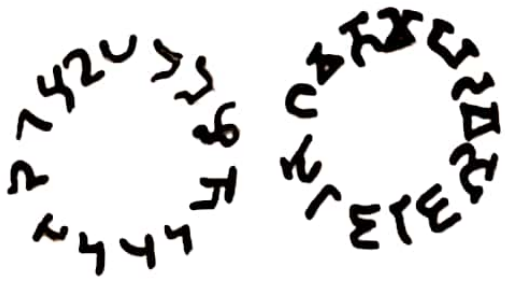
Alexander Cunningham had brought to light a silver coin (0.65 inch, 33 grains = 2.138 g) showing an elephant with upraised trunk moving to left towards trident-battleaxe of Śiva with the Brāhmī legend around reading Bhāgavata Mahādevasa Rāja-raja on the obverse and humped Indian bull to right with a lotus flower under its head and Kharoshṭī legend around Bhagavata Mahadevasa Rajaraj(ñ)a on the reverse, which he attributed to king Mahādeva belonging to the Audumbara tribe which ruled Pathankot-Kangra-Hamirpur region during the second-first centuries BCE.[1] The attribution of this coin-type to Audumbara Mahādeva has been the subject of a long-drawn controversy amongst scholars.[2] The Temple-type square copper coins attributed to the alleged Audumbara Mahādeva like other Audumbara coins (Pl. I.1-2) shows the following legend pattern without king's name-

		Kharoshṭhī	Brāhmī
(A)	Titles (Mahdevasa raña)	Above	Above
(b)	Name of the issuer	On left	On right
(c)	Name of the tribe	On right	On left

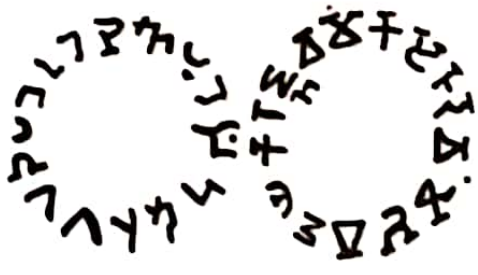




The silver coins of Audumbara Dharaghosha (Pl. I.3-4) also differ substantially from the legend pattern of the Mahādeva-type silver coins under discussion. These coins therefore cannot be attributed to any Audumbara chief of the name of Mahādeva.[3] The legend pattern of these coins compares better with the Vemaki coins of Rudravarman (Pl. I.5) and Bhavavarman-



Mahādeva-type



Rudravarman

*1401, PUSHPAC Complex , Sector 49B, Chandigarh

Bhavavarman

Since the coin-type showed bull and elephant as the main devices like those of the Vemaki coins who probably ruled in the neighbourhood of the Audumbaras, a spatial and temporal proximity may be guessed. Sircar regarded the Bull/Elephant type silver round pieces bearing the legend Bhagavata-Mahadevasa rajaraña (or rajarajasa), Sanskrit Bhāgavata-Mahādevasya rājarājasya, 'of Mahādeva, the worshipper of the Bhagavata [and] the king of kings' as "issued in the name of the god Mahādeva conceived as a ruler apparently because the kingdom had been dedicated to the deity".[4] Jai Prakash Singh also takes these coins as Audumbara and compares them with the Brahmaṇyadeva type Yaudheya coins. He feels that "these pieces were issued by Dharaghosha to commemorate his victory over the Indo-Greeks. And since Dharaghosha is said to have imitated the money of Appolodotus, it may be justified to think that the same Indo-Greek king had to suffer a political humiliation sometime towards the close of his reign".[5] Earlier, S.K. Chakrabortty[6] had also taken Mahādeva of the legend as god Śiva observing that "the legend on these coins had been interpreted to refer to a king named Mahādeva. But this cannot be taken to be certain. The word bhagavata is generally applicable to gods, and the title rajaraja, the king of kings, is more applicable to a god than to the king of a small principality... So I would rather take this legend as applicable to god Mahādeva and the coin seems to be dedicated to him like the Chatreśvara type or the Kuṇinda coins. The legend therefore may be interpreted as follows: 'in the name of the Almighty Mahādeva, the king of kings'". Bela Lahiri[7] and P.L. Gupta[8] too follow Chakrabortty and Sircar to interpret Mahādeva as Śiva but attribute these coins to the Vemakis following Chakrabortty's suggestion that during the critical period of the Indo-Scythian inroads the Vemakis dedicated their state to their presiding deity Mahādeva like the Kuṇindas and the Yaudheyas who dedicated their states to their respective national gods Chatreśvara and Brahmaṇyadeva-Kumāra.

Coins of this type were quite rare till the early eighties of the last century when a big hoard containing specimens of this type and numerous Kuṇinda silver coins was

discovered probably in the Palampur area.[9] Taking stock of almost all known specimens and on the basis of an analytical analysis thereof in 2007, I reached the conclusion that these coins belong neither to any Audumbara or Vemaki king nor were they struck in the name of Mahādeva-Śiva. I brought to light some specimens showing the Brāhmī legend as Bhagavata Māhādevasya Rāja-rājña(ḥ*) which clearly indicated that they were issued by a king who was a devotee of Mahādeva and probably bore the personal name Rāja-rājan on the model of Indo-Greek hemi-drachms struck by Apollodotus.[10] Analysis based on the direction of the Bull and the Elephant and the subsidiary symbols revealed the following types, varieties and sub-varieties

Type	Variety	Position of Bull and Elephant	No. of sub-varieties
I	A	→ ←	8 (nos. 1–8)
	B	→	1 (no. 9)
	C	←	1 (no. 10)
II	A	→ →	5 (nos. 11-15)
	B	→	1 (no. 16)
III	A	← →	3 (nos. 17-19)
	B	→	1 (no. 20)
IV	A	← ←	1 (no. 21)
	B	←	1 (no. 22)
	C		1 (no. 23)

Coins showing both the bull and the elephant walking to right and left and those with both the animals walking to left are comparatively rare. Of the latter only a few specimen represent the known varieties.

Early in 2013, probably in the month of February, a very big hoard of more than a thousand silver coins of the Kuṇindas containing some specimens of Mahādeva type surfaced in Himachal Pradesh and has been in trade. The exact provenance is not revealed by the traders but according to one source the hoard came from somewhere near Dharampur on Kalka-Shimla highway. Scans of three specimens were forwarded to me by Mr. Jeevandeep Singh of Ludhiana for

identification (Pl. I.6-8). Of these one specimen (Pl. I.6) depicts the bull and the elephant walking to right, the bull having a svastika on its back, i.e. belonging to Type II, Variety B, and two coins show both the animals walking to left (Pl. I.7-8). These two specimens are, however, interesting as they show the bull as carrying a nandipada on the back and a svastika near its face, located between the letters va and sa of Mahadevasa of the legend. These coins thus represent hitherto unknown variety. They have been struck from different dies. The hoard may have probably contained many other unknown varieties of Mahādeva type and Kuṇinda coins but alas it seems to have been disposed off in parts.

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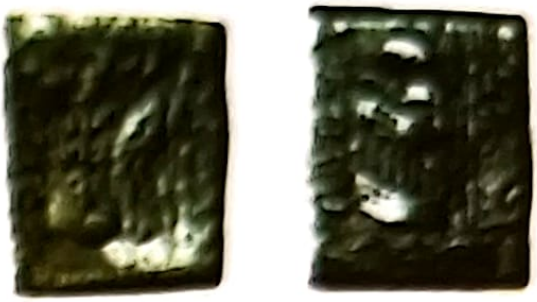

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Buddhists Of Trigarta And Kuluta : Fresh Light Of The Archaeological Evidence From AD 100-700

Laxman S. Thakur*

The available archaeological evidence on the spread of Buddhism in Himachal Pradesh during the ancient and early medieval period is not very encouraging. No Aśokan Buddhist monument has so far been discovered form Himachal, however, a set of the fourteen major rock edicts inscribed at Kalsi in Dehradun district of Uttar Pradesh, near Paonta Sahib might indicate that the region did not remain unaffected form massive Buddhist activity undertaken during his reign.

A definite record of the Buddhist penetration in Kangra (Tigarta) comes from Kanihara (Khanyara). Bilingual inscriptions were discovered there by E.C. Bayley as early as 1854[1]. The two huge granite boulders are incised in Kharoṣṭhī (75cms. by 48cms.) and Brāhmī (128cms. By 53cms.) scripts of the first/ second century A. D. The Kharoṣṭhī version in Prākrit language reads (P1.I):

Line 1 : Kṛṣṇayaśas

Line 2 : ārāma

The Brāhmī version besides kṛṣṇayaśasya ārāma adds mādaṅgisya in the second line (P1.II). Bayley translate the Kharoṣṭhī version as 'the garden of Krishnayaśas' ,[2] and remarked that in the 'second inscription some wag has apparently added the epithet "medangisa" , "corpulent" from..... "med" fat and ....."anga" a body[3]. Dowson proposed a new reading for the Brāhmī version and read it as 'Krishnayasasya arama madantasaya' 'the garden of the happy Krishnayasa'[4]. Mādantasya for mādaṅgisya cannot be accepted for the reasons that the use of the small i in the g is quite clear in the inscription. Alexander Cunningham re-examined the inscription in situ in 1872-73 and rightly corrected the readings of Bayley, especially of the second line of the Brāhmī version[5]. He proposed mādaṅgisya for medaṅgisya. However, he did not properly record the name of the spot from where these inscriptions are located. The place is known to the locals as ghar-kukaṛa or *mūrgī*-ghar, i.e. hen's coop[6]. He was correct in observing that the mādaṅgi may perhaps have been the name of the district or possibly of the recorder of the inscription. He also interpreted the word ārāma as a 'Buddhist monastery'[7]. Vogel however preferred the ordinary meaning of the word ārāma as garden instead of monastery.[8] Taking into consideration the readings of the scholars mentioned above

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along with our own examination of these inscriptions in situ in 1981, 1990, 1994 and 1998 the following 'texts' and 'translations' are proposed.

Kharoṣṭhī	=	line 1	:	*Kṛṣṇayaśas*
		Line 2	:	*ārāma*

It can be translated as 'the Buddhist monastery of *Kṛṣṇayaśas*'.

Brāhmī	=	line 1	:	*Kṛṣṇayaśasya ārāma*
		Line 2	:	*mādaṅgisya*

The translation would be ' the Buddhist monastery of Kṛṣṇayaśas, of the Mādaṅgi' (region of clan?).

There is one minor error in the use of the a-stroke in the second line of the Brāhmī version. The inscriber has used it on the left leg of the m instead of the right , but it cannot be read as me for the fact that e-stroke never turns of the right side. The word *ārāma* is significant for the present discussion. * Ārāma, according to Sukumar Dutt, 'was an enclosed site, usually a donation to the monks by a wealthy layman in or near a town, looked after by the donor himself '.[9] The selection of the site for an *ārāma* on the right bank of the Manjhi river seems to be most suitable for several reasons. The settlement was situated a little far away from the villages of Kanihara, Darhi and Dharamsala, thus an ideal place for the community of monks. The site is located in the middle of the agricultural fields from where the monks could easily collect their grain-share at the time of the harvest. It is very likely that some land in its vicinity was attached to it and monks could devote some time for agricultural activity. The inscription are engraved on the huge boulders, and everybody passing through the bridle path- linking Kanihara with the low lying villages of Trigarta could have a glance of them. Who was Kṛṣṇayaśas? Inscriptional evidence is silent about him. He was probably a wealthy man of the Mādaṅgi region or clan who established an *ārāma* in the vicinity of Kanihara and also looked after it personally.

The two symbols- nandipada and svāstika- are carved at the end of the second line of the Brāhmī inscription. Similar symbols are seen on another rock inscription, discovered by Vogel at Pathyar, in 1901.[10] The Pathyar rock inscription, however, does not provide any information on the expansion of Buddhism in Kangra but the two symbols are also carved on it (Pl. III). Nandipada and svāstika were used by the tribal people on their coins. For example, the coins of the Kulūtas, Kunindas, Mālavas, Yaudheyas and Vṛṣṇis have shown both nandipada and svāstika.[11] Scholars are agreed that the Vṛṣṇis were the worshippers of Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva. The Yaudheyas

presiding deity was Skanda Kārttikaya; the Audumbaras were Śaivite. The nandipada symbol has been noticed by me on the Bonpo rock carvings at Tabo.[12] Therefore, the two symbols were used by several people and hence their Buddhist association alone cannot be accepted. The Kanihara inscription, in addition to these symbols specifically refers to an ārāma thus its Buddhist association is confirmed.

Several stone sculptures dated between the sixth and seventh centuries have been found form the Kangra district within a radius of about 20km. Kanihara, Chetru the Pathyar-Lakhamandal triangle seems to be significant form the Buddhist point of view. The widespread existence of Buddhism in the kingdoms of Jālandhara and Kulūta is confirmed by the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang who passed through the region sometime in AD. 630. In the kingdom of Jālandhara, according to Hiuen Tsang, there were about 'fifty convents (monasteries) or so; about 2000 priests.....of the Great and Little Vehicle'.[13] He is not referring to any specific saṅghārāma or stūpa in the kingdom. Kangra (Trigarta) was part of the Jālandhara kingdom . The Si-yu-ki is silent about his exact route he followed from the capital city of Jālandhara to Kulūta. However, his description of the Buddhists of the Kulūta kingdom is fairly good:

> There were in the country twenty Buddhist monastries with above 1000 Brethern of whom the most were Mahāyānists, a few adhering to Schools (that is, belonging to Hīnayana system)..... In this country was a tope erected by Aśoka to mark the place at which the Buddha on his visit to the district (emphasis added) had preached and received Members into his church.[14]

Thomas watters has interpreted the ku-lu-to as ' "accumulation" district of the Sarvata Vinaya'[15] and further adds that ' the Buddha goes from the Tamasāvana to the Chi-chi district where he converts and receives into his church a Yaksha who afterwards builds a monastery.[16] The meaning of the Chinese chi-chi is 'accumulation' and has been equated with kula 'heap' or 'collection'. If this interpretation is accepted it would become clear that the Buddha visited the Kulūta region and subsequently the Mauryan king Aśoka built a stūpa to commemorate the Buddha's visit of the region. This seems to be the same place which was visited by Tibetan pilgrim, rGod-Tsaṅ-pa (AD 1189-1258) Sometime between AD. 1213-17. He

tells us that the place was called 'Siddhi' and there he saw a stone with the foot-prints of the Buddha.'[17] If there is any possibility of the stūpa, belonging to the Mauryan period, that region could be the Kulūta region not the Trigarta.

J. Ph. Vogel identified a mound at Chetru and called it 'the Buddhist stūpa.'[18] The most problematic question associated with this stūpa (?) is its exact extant and size (P1.IV). A small hillock which emerges abruptedly between the rivers Manjhi and Ghurla is surrounded by the huge granite boulders. The presence of the huge boulders on the north-eastern side of the mound clearly indicates their natural location in situ (P1. V). Only a small portion of the mound at the topmost level was inhabited possibly by a Buddhist settlement. The excavation of the mound can reveal the real nature of the Buddhist settlement until then nothing can be said on the so called 'the Chetru stūpa'. What is, however, clear from the other findings from Chetru is that there once existed a Buddhist establishment (saṅghārāma or vihāra) because in 1905 F. Farley, the executive engineer of the Kangra division, discovered two stone sculptures of the Buddha while cutting through the south- eastern portion of the mound for the new cart road from Kangra (Nagarkot) to Dharamsala. We are informed by Vogel that one of the statues was placed in the Lahore Museum and another Buddha's statue was set-up near the site.[19] The latter statue still stands in four- pillared concrete shrine in the adjoining litchi garden known as the Rānī-kā-bāg, and worshipped as Draupadī (P1. VI). It measures 127cm in height and has remained unfinished. The presence of the curls on the head, and the broad shoulders tend to confirm that it represents a standing Buddha. The female figures are carved on his either sides. Another stone statue measuring 62cm x 33cm also stands on the right side of the Buddha. It seems to be a female figure wearing a long Sāṇī. The statue's head is covered with the cloth. (Now someone has broken it into pieces when we saw it in February 1994 and subsequently in 1998).

The description of the Buddha's head, discovered from the site at Chetru, has been given by Vogel. The statue which is now in the Lahore Museum measures 40cm (16 inches). It shows Indian characteristics with 'long drawn eyes.....heavy lips.....short schematic curls.'[20] The presence of the uṣṇīṣa and a forehead mark ūrṇā makes it possible to reconstruct the appearance of the two other headless Buddhas from Lakhamandal. The other Buddhist finding from Chetru includes the Buddha's foot-prints carved on a chiselled stone measuring 22cm x 12cms x 8cm (P1.VII).

Almost contemporaneous with the Buddhist sculptures from Chetru is an inscribed stone pedestal noticed by T .D. Forsyth at Chahri in 1854 and later moved

to Kangra. It was seen outside the circuit house by Alexander Cunningham in 1870s and published it subsequently.[21] It is quite clear from the notes of T.D. Forsyth that the inscribed stone once belonged to a temple which stood at Lakhamandal. Chahri and Lakhamandal are twin villages of the Lakhamandal panchayat. The existence of a temple at Lakhamandal is confirmed by C. J. Rodgers. He says:

> Ruins of temple which once was built of large bricks and stone. The bricks were taken away to make a bridge over the Baner, several stone idols are still lying about the mound. The style of sculpture displayed in these indicate great age..... The mound in now a heap of earth and bricks ends. A small temple has been made by the villagers out of broken images and bricks. In front of this is a fluted pillar standing in the ground without either capital or base. Lakha Mandar is now a ransacked ruin. [22]

Several broken statues and bricks are scattered around the site till today. The inscribed pedestal discussed above also belonged the same site. The pedestal is now untraceable, but its drawings published by Cunningham make us believe that it once enshrined possibly a Vajarvārāhī . The ye-dharma formula has been written on it in the proto-Śaradā characters of the seventh century AD.

The two headless Buddhas from Lakhamandal also deserve notice. The larger statue measuring 86cm x72cm is now in the collection of the Museum of Kangra Art, and the smaller one measuring 41.5cm x 36cm (Acc. No. 82.136) is in the State Museum, Shimla. Both statues are shown in bhūmisparśamudrā. The lotus-āsana of the larger statue is clearly visible. The kneeling devotees with folded hands appear at the extreme corners of the statue. A pair of deer is carved below the seat of the smaller Buddha. The two heads of lion are shown between the devotee and the deer in the same statue, symbolically representing the simhāsana. The depiction of the dancing females on either side of the Buddha seems to be one of the main characteristics of the Trigarta artists. Stylistically, both the statues belong to the seventh century for reasons that along with these sculptures has been found an inscribed Jain statue (presently in the collection of the Museum of Kangra Art) bearing an inscription in the proto-Śaradā characters of the seventh century AD.

An inscribed brass statue which was bought by Hirananda for a sum of eighty rupees in 1905 at Fatehpur, is now in the collection of the Lahore Museum.[23] The statue, including the pedestal, is 30cm high and 13.5cm wide across the knees. The seated Buddha is shown in dharmacakrapravartanamudrā. We are not describing its iconographic features because Vogel has already done so, but a few special details deserve notice, and need to be elaborated further. The folds of the monastic robe on the back side remind us of similar folds depicted by the sculptors while modelling the quadruple Varirocana in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ at Tabo. The depiction of the lion-throne is equally fascinating for such throne is frequently shown below the statues of Vairocana and Amitābha in Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti during the late tenth and eleventh centuries. The carving of dragon-like animal with a long snout and curved horns as seen on the pedestal discussed here, however, disappeared subsequently. The corner pillars, deriving inspiration primarily from the Indo-Cornithian style, and the U-shaped folds of the drapery of the Buddha are typical examples of the Gandhara art. The fringed border design seen in this statue was later copied by the takṣakas on the facade of the Lakṣaṇā Devī temple, Bharmaur.[24] The suspended fringes or bobbins at interval between the two extreme sides later became one of the main features of the wooden architecture of the western Himalaya. The pearled-roundel design on the cushion of the Buddha is of the Iranian origin. This particular decorative device became very popular among the artists during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Several deities encircled within the pearled-roundel are painted on the ceiling of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ at Tabo. Such designs also appear later in Alchi. The continuation of this design is borne out by the fact that artists have carved the panels of gods and goddesses on the fountain slabs discovered from Triloknath in Lahaul-Spiti, and Siya, Luj and Bharara in Churah and Pangi area of Chamba district, Himachal Pradesh.

My analysis of the Buddhists of Trigarta and Kuluta will remain incomplete if I do not mention the stone Avalokiteśvara from Kalat near Manali (P1.VIII). The image adorns the sanctum of the Kapil Muni temple.[25] It measures 26cm x19cm. The old temple of Kapil Muni suffered considerable damages due to landslides more than 100 years ago during the custodianship of Om Prakash Mahant's grandfather. All the statues have been moved to the new temple, now which is situated on the left of the national highway number 21. This is the same statue briefly referred to by Vogel in an article published in 1902.[26] Its photograph was taken by Shuttleworth in the beginning of this century and T.S. Maxwell recently

published this by the courtesy of Penelope Chetwode.[27] Avalokiteśvara is shown in the lalitāsana with the six hands and Amitābha is carved on the crown in dhyānamudrā. All the iconographic features of the statue are not clearly visible. However, the left upper hand carries a tridaṇḍi. The right middle hand, which was visible in the photograph taken by Shuttle worth, has now totally defaced.

The lakṣaṇas and mudrās of the two other right hands are defaced, but the position of the arms indicates that they were in jñānamudrā and varadamudrā respectively. The middle left hand holds what looks like a snake and the lower hand possibly hand a kalaśa in the middle of the palm which is now defaced. There are two notable differences between the Avalokiteśvara statue at Triloknath and the one under discussion. The middle left hand of the Kalat statue is stretched out, and snake is held with the head upward whereas at Triloknath the deity holds the snake with middle hand in the lap. The lotus- āsana of the Kalat statue is almost symbolic showing three petals. The head of the Kalat Avalokitesvara and the crowned Amitābha are sculpted out of proportion due primarily that the artists had fashioned the image without using appropriate proportions. This is a work of the post-thirteenth century AD when local art centres grew up on a larger scale and the 'local idioms' dominated the arts and crafts of Himachal Pradesh. This statue is so far the only surviving example of Buddhist remnants in the Bias valley.

Finally the social and economic milieu of Buddhist expansion in the regions discussed above needs to be commented on. Most of the sites yielding evidence of Buddhist remnants are located on the trade routes. Chetru was linked with Pathankot (Pratiṣṭhāna) on the west and Kīragrāma (Baijnath) on the east Kīragrāma was further linked with the Kulūta region. The places such as Kanihara, Pathyar, Lakhamandal and Chahri were used by Traders in local circuits of exchange, and they are even today closely linked with metalled and unmettaled roads. The availability of water from the snow-capped Dhauladhar range benefited the agricultural communities of the region. These communities were able to utilize water for irrigation through digging kuhls and tanks. The surplus cereals were sold at the haṭṭa of Suśarmapura (Nagarkot). The slates of Kanihara were in great demand in the neighbouring region. This seems to be an item of export from Trigarta. Kṛṣṇayaśa, who constructed an ārāma near Kanihara, was probably a rich merchant or a landed magnate engaged in slate trade. The discovery of clay beads, copper-bangles and terracotta tablets from the trial trenches at Chetru does not provide conclusive proof whether the monastic saṅgha was engaged in trade transactions. The Kuṣāṇas

opened up immense trade possibilities through the north-western part of India. Traders were able to go to trade centres in West and Central Asia. Regular traffic of traders across the major trade routes in the north-west and the Gangetic plains brought new ideas in arts and thoughts and helped sustain the Buddhist communities. The sculptural remains both form Trigarta and Kulūta undeniably show the influence of the Gandhara and Gupta art idiom. The political changes in the post-Kuṣāṇa period disturbed the Eurasian commercial network. A major shift took place in the north-west where the route through Kashmir connecting India to Central Asia gained importance.[28] However this did not last long. The political rivalry between the Arabs, Chinese, Tibetans and the Turks further disturbed the movement of both traders and pilgrims. The revival of the Brahmanical religion, sometime in the seventh century, perhaps was one of the factors contributing to the decline of Buddhism. Archaeological findings from Lakhamandal suggest that the Jains, Vaiṣṇavas and Śaivas also established their temples long the major trade routes or in those places which were agriculturally fertile zones. The establishment of a maṇḍapikā-type[29] shrine near the Kanihara inscription and the discovery of a Jain and a Vaiṣṇava sculptures from Lakhamandal amply suggests this. The absence of patronage and major shifts in trade routes in the north-west possibly contributed to the decline of Buddhism and it could not gain its earlier popularity in Trigarta, Kulūta and Śatadru what it enjoyed earlier from AD 100 to 700.

Notes

1 E. C. Bayley , 'Note on two Inscriptions at Khunniara in the Kangra District', Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, vol. XXIII, 1854, pp. 57-9.

2 Ibid., p 58.

3 Ibid.

4 J. Dowson, 'On a newly Discovered Bactrian Pali Inscription, and on other Inscriptions in the Bactrian Pali Character', Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, vol. XX, 1863, p. 254, fig.2, P1. IX.

5 Alexander Cunningham, Report for the Year 1872-73, Archaeological Survey of India, vol. V, rpt., Varanasi, 1970, pp. 175-7, p1 XLII.

6 Cunningham adds that 'the name of the spot or land on which these inscribed rocks are found is Gharkūrpar, of which no one know the meaning' (ibid., p. 177). The correct name of the spot, however, is ghar-kukaṛa 'hen' s coop'.

7 Ibid., p.176

8 J. Ph. Vogel, 'Two Brāhmī and Kharoshthī Rock-Inscriptions in the Kangra Valley' , Epigraphia Indica, vol. VIII, 1902-3, p. 118. The Kharoṣṭhī versions of both inscriptions have been re-examined by Sten Konow. See S. Konow, ed., Kharoshthī Inscriptions with the Exception of those of Aśoka, rpt., Varanasi, 1969, pp. 178-9.

9 Sukumar Dutta, Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India, rpt., Delhi, 1988, p.58.

10 Vogel, 'two Brāhmī Inscriptions..' , p. 116; see Report of the Archaeological Survey, Panjab Circle from the Ist January to the 30th June 1901, p. 9.

11 For the typology of symbols on the coins of the tribal republics, see Kalyan Kumar Dasgupta, A Tribal History of Ancient India: A Numismatic Approach, Calcutta, 1974, pp.79-82 for Kulūtas; pp. 99-103 for Kunindas; pp.122-4 for Mālavas; pp.214-19 for Yaudheyas and pp. 190-1 for Vṛṣṇis.

12 See Laxman S. Thakur , Buddhism in the Western Himalaya: A Study of the Tabo Monastery, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999, chapter II, fig.2.

13 Samuel Beal, tr., Si-yu-ki: Budddhist Record of the Western World, 2nd ed, New Delhi, 1983, book IV, p. 176; also see Thomas Watters, on Yuan Chwang's Travels in India, eds. T. W. Rhys Davids and S.W. Bushell, 2nd ed., New Delhi, 1973, p. 296.

14 Thomas Watters, in ibid., p.298.

15 Ibid., p.299.

16 Ibid.

17 Tibetan text can be seen in Giusepee Tucci, Travels of Tibetan Pilgrims in the Swat Valley, Calcutta, 1940, p. 92.

18 See Annual Progress Report of the Superintendent of the Archaeological Survey, Northern Circle for the Year ending 31st March 1906, pp. 2, 36.

19 Ibid., p. 36.

20 Annual Progress Report of the Superintendent of the Archaeological Survey, Panjab and United Provinces Circle, for the year ending 31st March 1905, pp. 49-50.

21 Cunningham, Report for the Year 1872-73, pp. 177-8, pl. XLII, fig.2.

22 Charles J. Rodgers, Revised List of objects of Archaeological Interest in the Panjab, Lahore, 1891, p. 44.

23 J.Ph. Vogel, ' Inscribed Brass Statuette from Fatehpur (Kangra)' , Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report, 1904-5, pp. 107-9, p1. XXXV.

24 For example, see Laxman S. Thakur, The Architectural Heritage of Himachal Pradesh: Origin and Development of Temple Styles, New Delhi, 1996, pp. 90-1, p1 LXXXII.

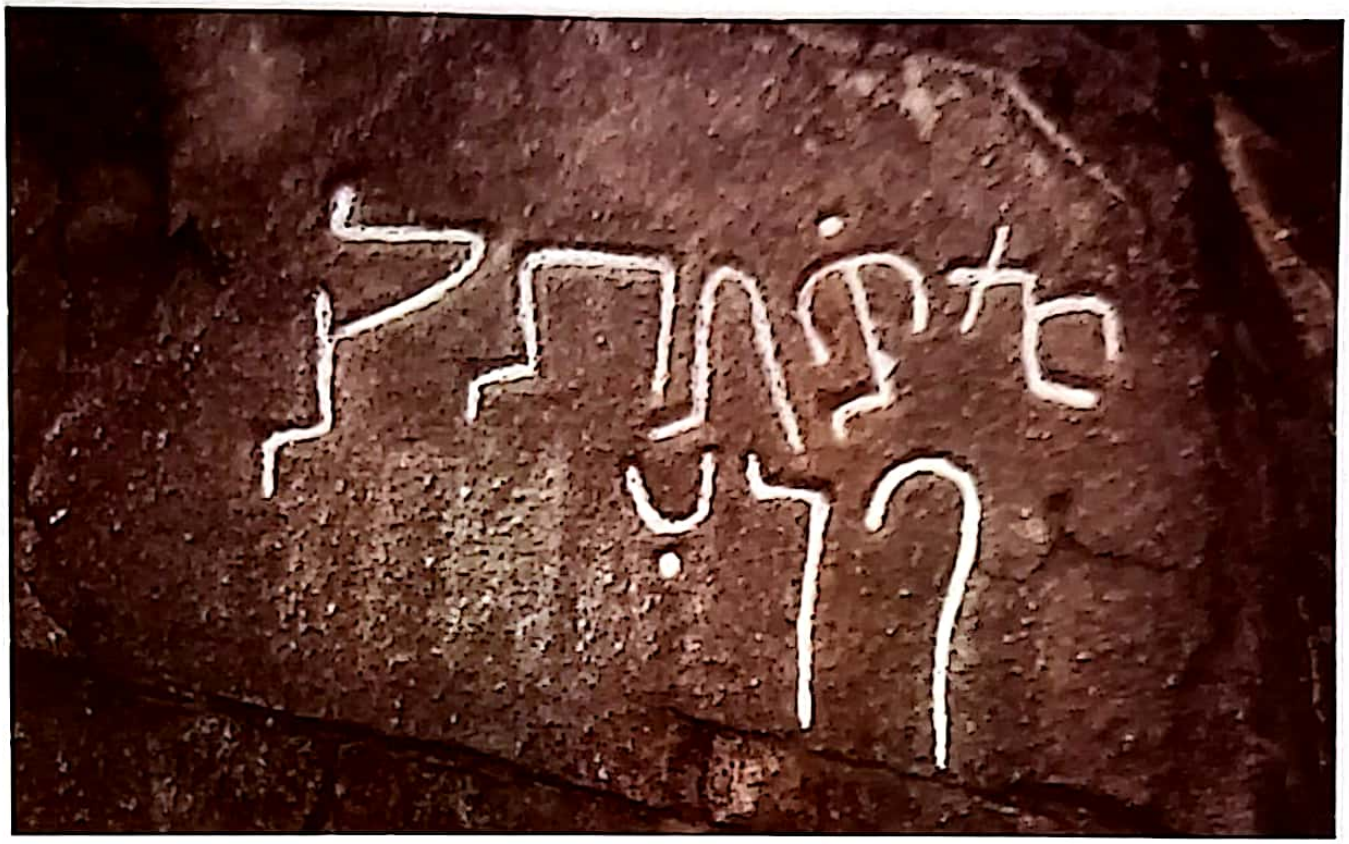
25 I thank Mr. Om Prakash Mahant for his hospitality at Kalat.

26 J,Ph. Vogel, 'Triloknath' Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, vol. LXX, pt, 1, no. 1, 1902, pp. 38-9.

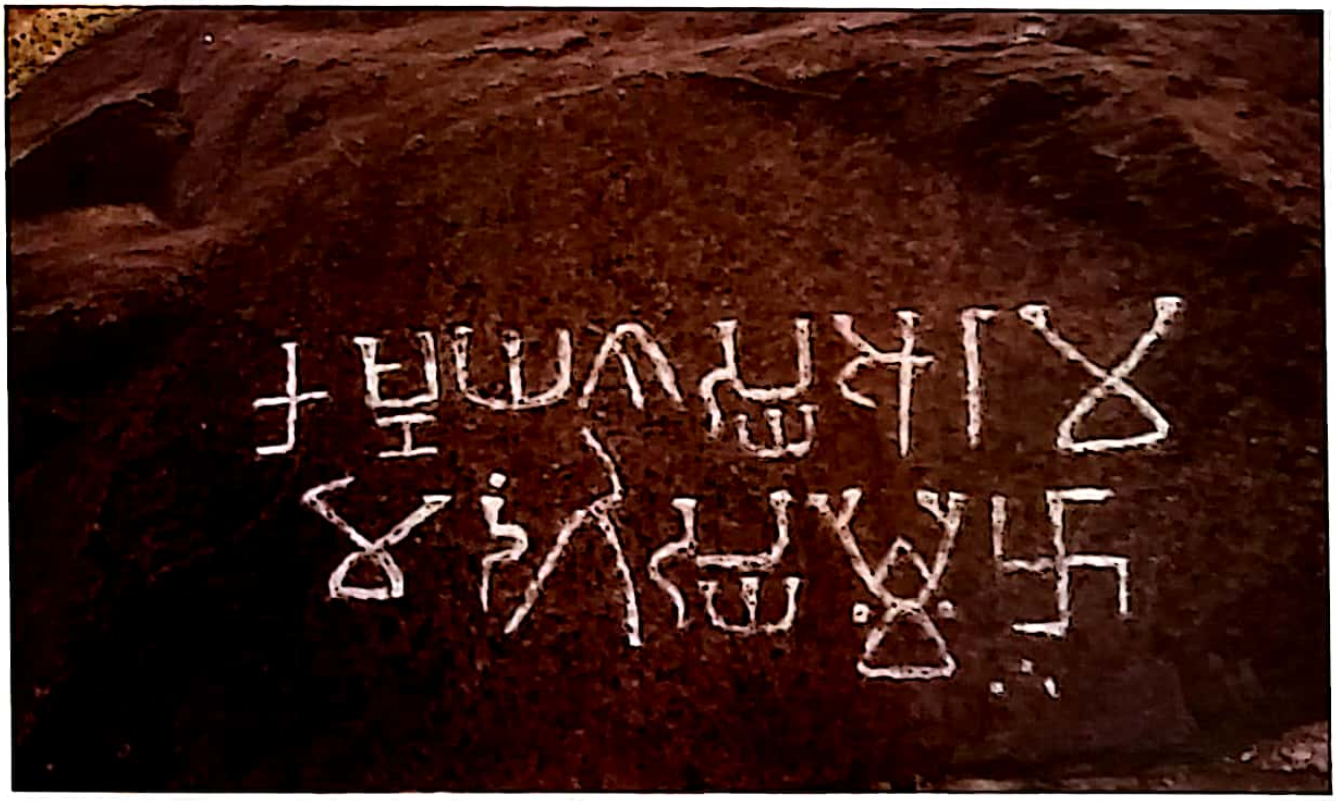
27 See T. S. Maxwell, ' Lākhamaṇḍal and Trilokināth : The Transformed Functions of Hindu Architecture in two Cross-Cultural Zones of the Western Himalaya' , Art International, vol. XXIV, Pts. 1-2, 1980, pp. 68-70, p1. 52.

28 For example , see Xinru Liu, Ancient India and Ancient China: Trade and Religious Exchanges, AD 1-600, New Delhi, 1997, pp. 34-5.

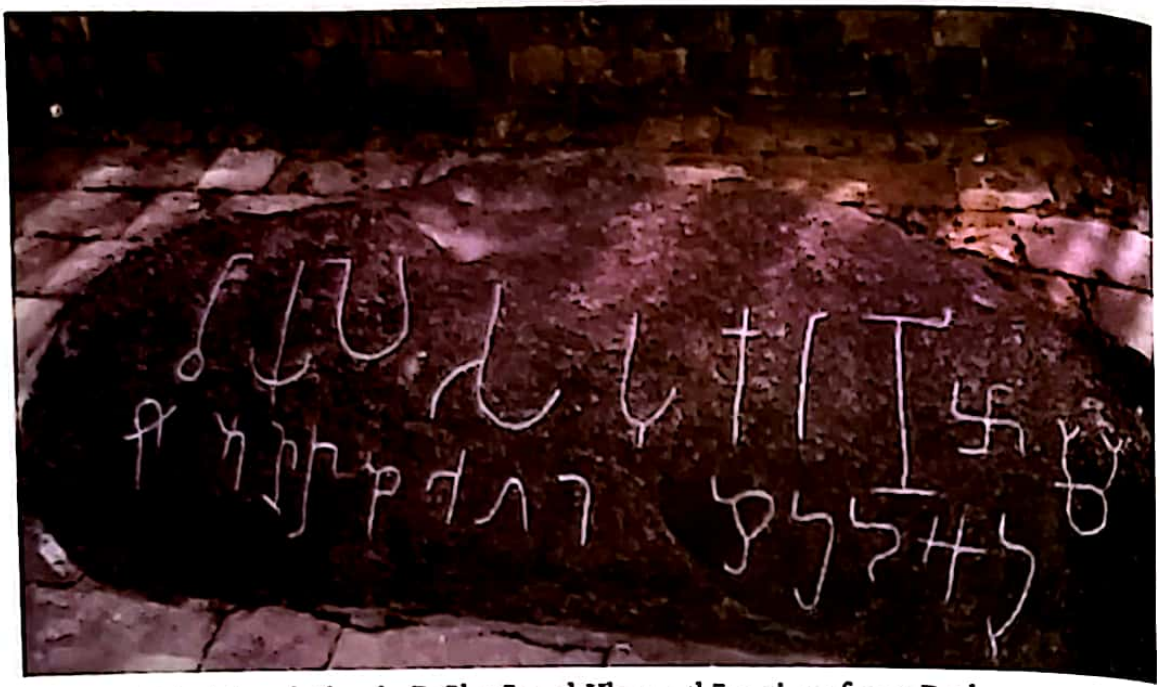
29 The discovery of the Śiva- linga near the inscriptions at Kanihara is significant considering the statements of Cunningham and Vogel that they were not able to trace any other antiquity around the site. The height of the linga is 60cm and Nandī measures about 70cm by 41cm. Both sculptures are made of sandstone.



Pl.I. Two-lines Kharoṣṭhī inscription near Kanihara, Kangra district.

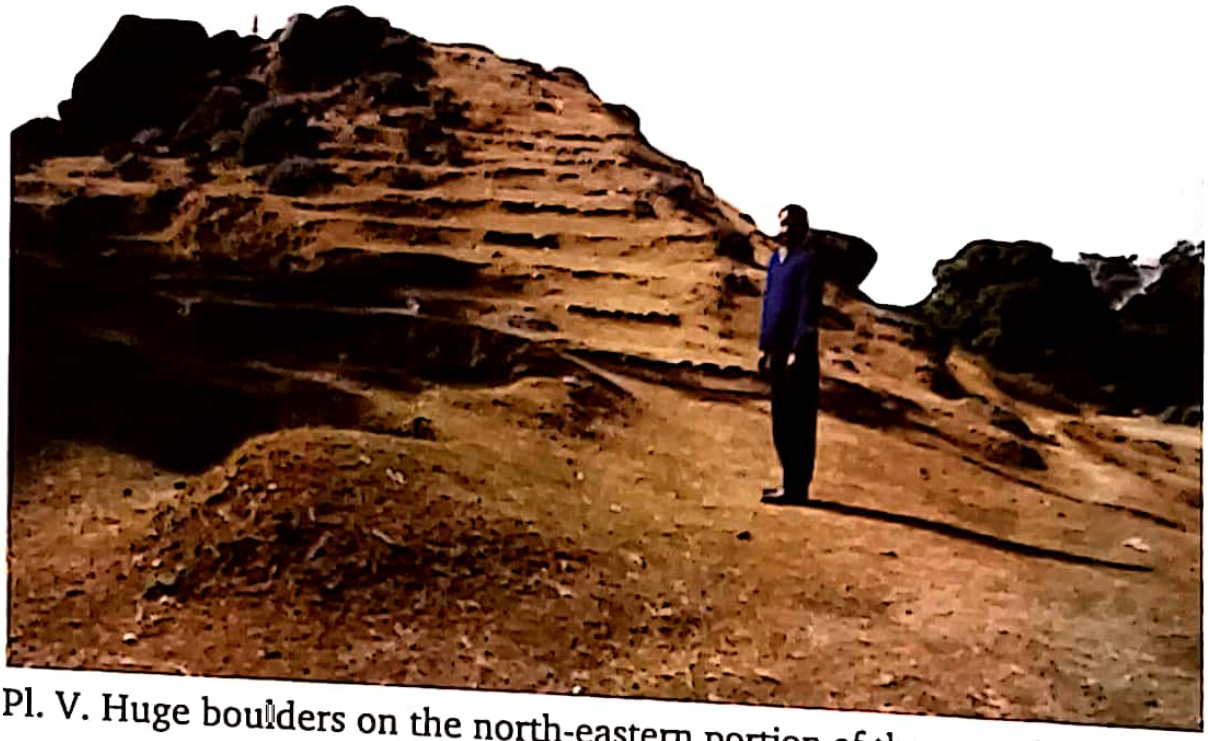


Pl.II. Two-Lines Brāhmī inscription near Kanihara.

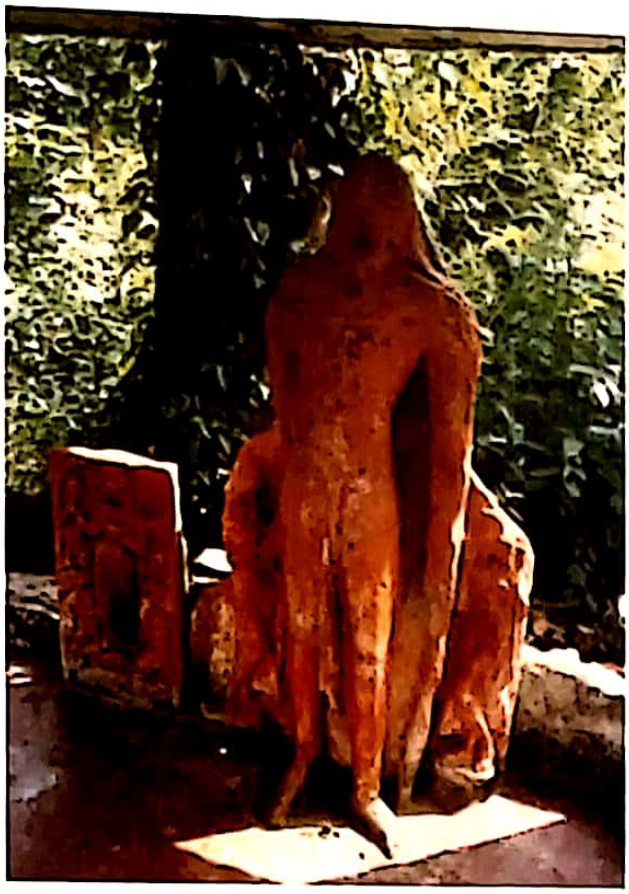


Pl. III. Inscription in Brāhmī and Kharoṣṭhī scripts from Pathyar.

Pl.IV. A mound at Chetru. Seen in the picture is a bridge constructed over the Ghurla rivulet. The state highway number 32 links Kangra with Dharmasala.



Pl. V. Huge boulders on the north-eastern portion of the mound at Chetru.



Pl. VI. Unfinished standing statue of the Buddha enshrined in the Rānī-kā-bāg, Chetru

Pl.VII. The foot-prints of the Buddha, Chetru

Pl. VIII. A stone statue of Avalokiteśvara, Kapil Muni temple, Kalat, Kulu district.

ŚAKTA PILGRIMAGES IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

Dr. D. P. Dubey*#

When remembered in difficulties,
you remove tear in all beings:
When remembered in safety,
You give a mind conducive to doing good.
You remove the fear if poverty.
Except You, none is there with a heart
Ever-flowing with compassion to do good to all.

Durgāsapta śati, IV.17

Śakti worship is the worship of "Energy" personified as a female who is generally conceived as the all pervading Mother Goddess. She is regarded as the supreme Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer of the universe. From prehistoric time down to the present day her worship has been a universal phenomenon. Among hunting, pastoral and agricultural communities she has been worshipped as producer of life and source of fecundity. In the Epics and Purāṇas worship of Śakti is invariably associated with non-Aryan tribes, notably the Śabaras, Bhillas, and Pulindas of the Vindhya and Deccan, and the Kirātas of the Himalayan region. Places chosen for worship of the goddess or which are thought to be inhabited by her, are notably trees, mounds, hills, caves, forests and river banks.[1]

The emergence of Devī worship as an all India phenomenon as adumbrated in the body of Sanskrit texts arose much later. Several scattered ideas gradually harmonised into Śākta sect which, after a gestation in the early centuries of the Current era, spread far and wide during the early medieval period and the Hinduism of the period tended to view a goddess of obscure origin as a manifestation of the consort (Śākta) of Śiva or Viṣṇu. She is known by different names in different localities. She has been described by the people according to their own socio-economic. Background and has been accepted according to the regional philosophy. The cult of Śakti in Himachal, a state in its present form since 1971, is the subject of this presentation.

Śākta Shrines

Arranged according to their relative importance based on classification of

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holy sites associated with them, the chief deities of India fall in the following descending order-Śiva , Viṣṇu, Devī, and Hanumān. In Himachal Pradesh there are more places sacred to Śiva than any other deity. But popularity wise the Mother Goddess appears to be more prominent. Sometimes both Śiva and Devī seem to be of equal importance there. The antiquity of Devī worship is associated with Śiva, and she appears on the Kuṇinda coinage (first century BCE to first century CE) as Durgā-Lakshmī.[2] She is worshipped in Himachal in her benign and terrific forms. No village in Himachal is without a temple or an image of Devī. Thus the village of Jagatsukh, situated on the left bank of the river Beas in Kulu, is well Known for its temple of Sandhyā Gayatrī. It dates from the eighth century CE, and was frequently renovated during the fifteenth nineteenth centuries. The original image of Devī has possibly been lost and replaced by a crude work of late fifteenth century CE. The Durgā temple of great sanctity, locally known as Hāṭeśvarī, is one of the most celebrated shrines in the Shimla district. The sanctum enshrines a life size eightarmed aṣtandhātu image of Mahiṣāsuramardinī which is regarded a matchless specimen of the Pratīhāra art tradition in the Himalayan region. The entrance of the sactum carries an inscription belonging to the first half of the tenth century CE. It has however been frequently renovated and at present is re-roofed with tiny slates in the indigenous style.

The temple of Campāvatī at Chamba was erected by King Sāhilavarman (CE. 920-940) and was named after his daughter, Campāvatī now worshipped as a goddess. It enshrines a six armed black stone image of the goddess Campāvtī riding a tiger. A small image of Devī called Suhī Devī at Chamba commemorates the memory of Nayanādevī the queen of king Sāhilavarman, who gave up her life to save her daughter Campāvatī. The village Bharmaur, now a tehsil headquarter, in the Chamba district, is well- known for its Lakshaṇā Devī temple. The excellent bronze image of Lakshaṇā who is called Bhadrakāḷī in the Chamba vansāvalī and is stated to be an aspect of Durgā slaying the Buffalo-demon, was consecrated by king Meruvarman and made by the craftsman named Gugga, as recorded in an inscription of the eighty century CE on its pedestal. The temple of Vajreśvarī is situated in the village Sarota outside the Chamba town. It is believed that the temple was originally dedicated to Śiva , because its original sculptures are not Śākta . The present image of Vajreśvarī was dedicated by King Pratāp Singh in CE 1580. The temple though frequently renovated by many kings form the sixteenth to the middle of twentieth century, dates from the early twelfth century CE.[3] Chatrahi 25 km to the west of

Bharmaur, is famous for an old wooden temple of Śakti Devī. It carries an inscription of eighth century commemorating king Meruvarman's victory over his rivals with the assistance of Devī and revealing the image was made by Gugga. There is a medieval ruined temple of Ambikā Devī built by King Sansār Candra I in the second half of the fifteenth century CE in the Kangra fort. The small village of Udaipur in the Lahaul district possesses a wooden temple of Markula Devī. There is an aṣṭadhātu icon of Mahiṣāsuramardinī in the cella being worshipped under the name of Kali. It was originally dedicated to Sunworship[4], but was replaced by the cult of Śakti during the sixteenth century, as is evident form an inscription on the pedestal of the image dedicated by Himapāla in CE 1569-70. The present appearance of the temple is the result of repeated reconstructions, but the inner parts are datable to the twelfth century CE. The Hiḍimbā Devī temple at Dhungri near Manali was erected in CE 1553, as is revealed in an inscription of Bahādur Shāh on its doorway. This shrine with its high conical roof and quaint wood carving was once the chief sanctuary of the Kulu valley, the goddess to whom it is dedicated- the man-eating Hiḍimbā-being regarded as the patroness of Kulu. Its roof was in ruins in CE 1950 at the time of the visit of Postel. When he visited it again in CE 1983, the roof had been repaired, and has thus lost much of it ancient grandeur.[5] The temple of the goddess Tripurasundarī at Naggar is similar in style to that of Hiḍimbā Devī but devoid of wood carved decoration. Only the small square wooden sanctum with a tile covered roof of the temple of Ambikā Devī at Neopano in the Manali district is preserved, though the temple can not be older than that of Hiḍimbā Devī. The temple of Ambikā Devī at Nirmand on the Satluj is best known to archaeologists on account copper plate inscription it contains.

In fact, Himachal was a stronghold of Śaktism which exercised great influence in the Kangra valley. It is not possible to give a comprehensive account of the prevalence of Śaktism in Himachal at different times over a long period. Himachal has ever presented itself as a fruitful field for the cult of Devī. Local Devīs are numerous there. The village studies, if conducted will depict the goddess as a living embodiment controlling peoples' actions at every stage of their life. Referring to the Punjab, of which Himachal once formed an integral part, Niharranjan Ray has rightly quipped, "Very few people pause to consider this social phenomenon, or to consider the significance of such toponyms in these regions as, for instance, Ambala is derived from Ambā, one of the many names of Durgā; Chandigarh is named after caṇḍī; Panchkula is a technical term of unmistakable tantric significance; Kalka is a

vulgarisation of Kālikā; Shimla is Śyāmalā Devī in its anglicised version. A careful and close look at the postal directory of the Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh would yield a long list of such toponyms from which one may draw one's own conclusions. Besides throughout these regions one still finds a countless number of small, lowly shrines with all but shapeless of crude forms, places on their altars, which worshipper, lowly village folks describe as Manasā, Caṇḍi, Kālī, Nayanā, Durgā etc, which are all in one way or the other manifestations of Śakti."[6]

The early temples of Devī known so far are however, not much older than the eighth century and majority of them belong to the period extending from the twelfth to the sixteenth century CE. The main Śakti shrines of Himachal Pradesh comprise of Vajreśvarī Devī, popularly known as Kangra Devī, Jvālamukhi Devī, Cintapurṇi Devī, Cāmuṇḍā Devī and Nayanā Devī. Three of these shrines, viz. Vajreśvarī Devī at Kot Kangra, Jvālāmukhi Devī 32 km south- east from Kot Kangra and Cāmuṇḍā Devī, 15km from Dharmashala, lie in the Kangra valley. Cintapūrṇi Devī, 3km ahead of Bharwain, on a hill, lies between Hoshiarpur and Kangra, and Nayanā Devī is on a conical peak in Bilaspur area of Mandi. Cintapūrṇi Devī, as her name suggests, relives her devotes of all worries. She is also known by the name of Chinnamastā. A lump shaped symbol of the goddess lies on the hill at the top of 160 steps. Tradition has it that a brahmana named Māidās from the Patiala district in the Punjab, who escaped from forcible conversion to Islam in the thick jungles of the Śiwaliks during the late medieval period, built her shrine and acted as a priest in it. The fame of Devī spread soon, and devotees thronged to it in large number. A dispute between the two neighbouring states, Amba and Doda-Siba, arose about the ownership of the shrine sometime in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The Raja of Amba emerged victorious and granted the village Chaprah to Māidās for the upkeep of the shrine.[7]

The shrine of Nayanā Devī is possibly the creation of some Gūjara family living in its vicinity during the sixteenth century CE. Guru Govind Singh is said to have come to Devī who blessed him to take up arms against the depredations of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. There is evidence to show that he performed a Śaktiyajña of forty days duration at the shine in samvat 1735. (CE 1678). The ritual was performed by Pandit Kālakadās from Gujarat, assisted by Pandit Viṣṇupāl from Kashi and Pandit Śivavāk from Kashmir. The objective of the yajña on enquiry by the priests, was declared to be the complete annihilation of the Muslim rule in India.[8] In samvat 1719 (=CE1662) Guru Tegh Bahadur is known to have mentioned himself a

worshipper of Nayana Devī in the Paṇḍā- bahī of Ram Kishan at Prayāga.[9] It enshrines a c rude piṇḍi resembling a Śiva linga on which are painted two eyes (nayana in Hindi), and hence the name Nayanā Devī. It may have also been number after Nayanā Gūjara who is supposed to have discovered and consecrated the pindī of Devī in the cave near the shrine. As the fame of the shrine spread, devotees got a beautiful white shrine constructed with all the facilities. A pretty view of the shrine is obtained from the Gurudwara Anandpur Sahib. The shrine of Cāmuṇḍā Devī on the right bank of the river Baner Khad is much later in date. Its legend identifies her with Ambikā who appeared to protect people from the cruelties and inroads of some Raja of Kumaon-Garhwal region.[10] Curiously enough, the enshrined image there resembles that or Hanumān. To the rear of the shrine is a small cave where a linga is worshipped under the name of Nandikesvara. The shrine of Vajreśvarī , located in the suburb of Bhawan at Kangra is among the most ancient, as it was once one of the most renowned shrines of north- west India. The shrine of Jvālāmukhī is of even greater repute than that of Kangrā Devī. We will come back to these two celebrated Devī shrines a little later in detail.

These five Śakta shrines together with Manasā Devī (near Manimahra between Chandigarh and Kalka) and Vaiṣṇo Devī (near Katra in Jammu) are collectively called the "Seven Sisters" who are worshipped as aspects of the pan-Indian Great Goddess who slew the buffalo demon Mahiṣāsura (Fig.1) . According to popular belief connected with the north-west cult of the goddess, her tongue fell at Jvālāmukhi breast at Kangrā Devī, eyes at Nayanā Devī, forehead at Manasā Devī, feet at Cintapūrṇi Devī, and arms at Vaisno Devī. No part of her body is associated with Cāmuṇḍa Devī. In fact, most relevant to the goddess cycle of mythology is the creation of the Śākta piṭhas (seats of power) in the story of Satī, which developed during the medieval period (11th to 14th centuries) out of the ancient myth of the destruction of Dakṣa's sacrifice. According to various schemes, there are four seven, eight, forty two fifty one of one hundred and eight of these pīṭhas. Sources vary as to which part of Sati fell in which place with texts reflection regional biases. Since the problem has been analysed by Sircar in his Śākta Pīṭhas and is well known, it is not necessary to deal with it in detail here. Therefore classification of these Devī shrines according to whether or not they are a pīṭha is hardly useful, since listings of pīṭhas differ; a shrine's claim to being a pīṭha need not be universally recognised. The association of a holy site with one of Sati's limbs was determined usually by the individual imagination of devotes. The issue is further

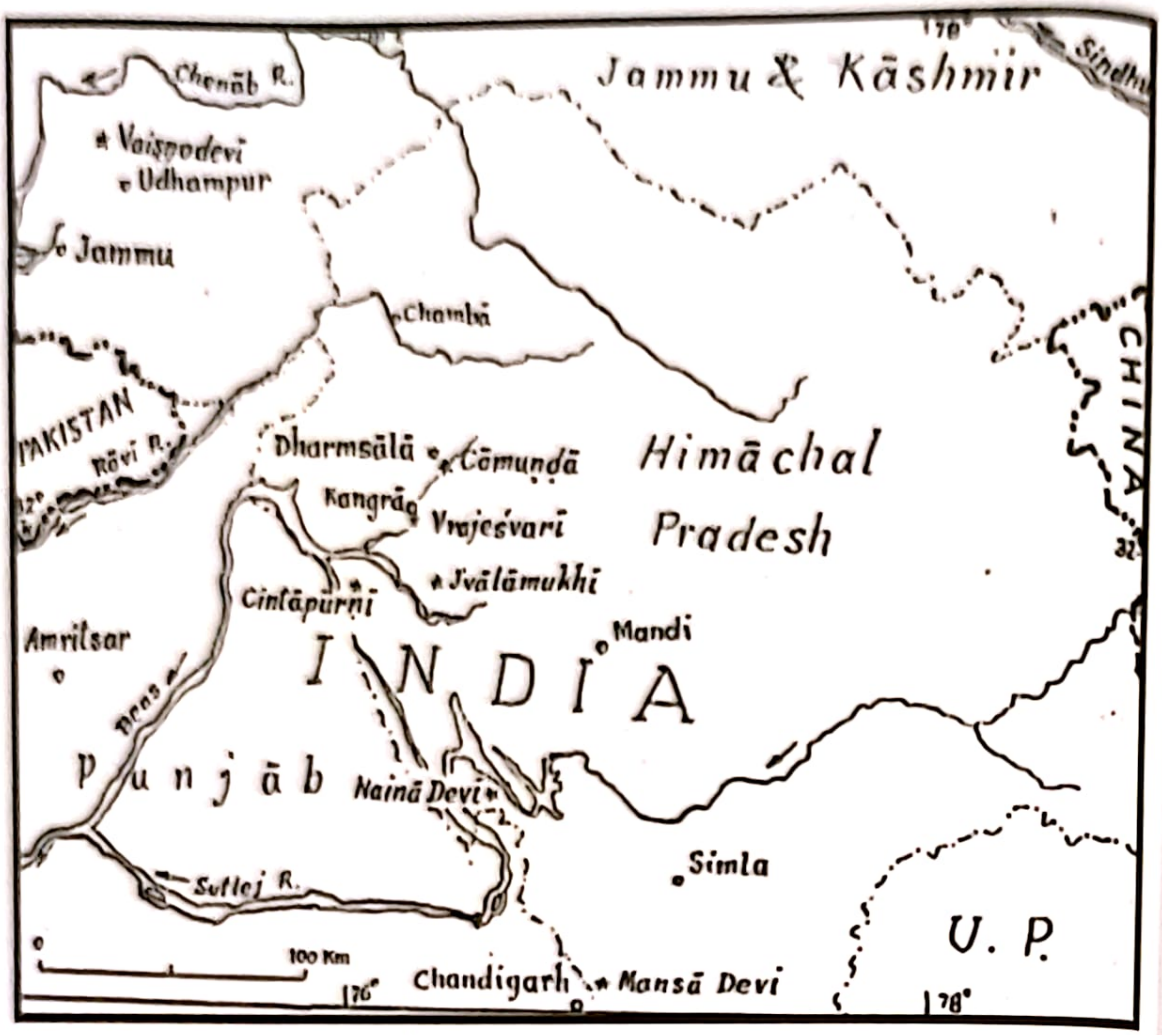

Fig.1: Main Śakta shrines in Himachal Pradesh

complicated by the designation Siddhapīṭha, where one or more Tantric practioners gained siddhi, and by the existence of a sub-category of upapīṭha where on part of Sati's body actually fell. One possible way of classifying temples is according to the degree of ferocity of the goddess to whom they are dedicated. The wide distribution of the Mahiṣamardinī sculptures and the popularity of the goddess slaying the demons must have a clear significance in the socio-religious milieu of Himachal Pradesh. Nayanā Devī of Kulu valley, Sirmaur and Bilaspur and Nayanī Devī of Nainital are examples of the extension of the cult of the goddess Nanna, Nana or Nina of Sumer through the Scythians and Kuṣāṇas during the first four centuries of the current era. The cult of the snake Goddess Manasā was popularised among higher sections of the peoples during thje fifteenth seventeenth centuries as is evidenced by three Manasāmaṅgalas written in Assam. Manasā finds its Buddhist counterpart in Jāngulī. The Śākta tantric goddesses Chinnamastā (=Cintapurṇi) and Vajreśvarī remind us of the Mahāyāna Buddhist Vajrayoginī and Vajravārāhī. Local variation, elaborations and fusions undoubtedly characterised the evolution of these new names and forms of the Hindu Mother Goddess. Even the story of Dhyānu Bhagat

associated with the "Seven Sisters" seems to be a Hinduised version of the cult of Dhyānī Buddha. In all likelihood, Śākta cult absorbed ideas from the religion of Śākyamuni. The idea of the distribution of Devī limbs bears a similarity with the distribution of Buddha's ashes in different parts of India over which Caityas were built. It may be pointed out that the antiquity of Buddhism in Himachal goes back to the second century CE and the greatest centre of tantrism in early medieval period seems to have originally been in North West India, although in late medieval age shifted to north east India.

Jālandhrapīṭha

There is both a district and a town with the name Jalandhara in the Punjab. According to Cunningham, Jalandhara was a very extensive kingdom in the time of Hsüan tsang (i.e. seventh century CE) and comprised almost all the tract of land between the Satluj and Ravi rivers in Himachal as well as Jalandhara Doab in the Punjab. The capital of the kingdom was the city of Jalandhara with a stronghold or place of refuge in troubled times at Kot Kangra or Nagarkot. After the Muslim invasions began, the territory on the plains was lost, and Nagarkot became the chief capital.[11] Rahul Sankrityayan thinks that Jalandhara was one of the five district divisions of the Himalaya and covered nearly the same area as Himachal Pradesh of today.[12] P.L. Gupta says, "The ancient name Jalandhara had a geo-physical connotation-Jalam dharati iti Jālandharah. And this very aptly applies to the mountainous Himachal Pradesh, in which the four great rivers of the Punjab Chenab, Ravi, Beas and Satluj-with a number of their tributaries originate."[13] According to Cunningham, the name is said to have been derived from the famous demon Jālandhara; the account of whose death is contained in the Jālandhara Purāṇa and is supported by local tradition.[14] Another name for the country found in the ancient sources was Trigarta, which means" the land watered by three rivers, e.g. the Ravi, the Beas, and the Satluj.[15] The name Trigarta was also synonymous with the Lower Beas valley, i.e. Kangra proper. This extensive and fertile tract played an important part throughout the history of North West India. There is however, no need to concern ourselves with a detailed history of Jālandhara or Trigarta.

There are a number of possible locations for the original Jālandharapīṭha. The oldest Tantras and Purāṇas do not provide us with much information on Jālandhara as a Śakta holy place. In the Kālikā Purāna[16] we read the Jālasaila is the residence of Caṇḍī, from which we could draw the conclusion that Jalandhara must be located on a hill. The early Tantras[17] preserving an old tradition of four pīṭhas, however,

unanimously speak of Jalandhara and nowhere do we find a reference to a hill or a mountain. In the list of 108 Śakta holy places[18]- considered late interpolation- we find that Jalandhara is the seat of Viśvamukhī, but these places are not regarded as pīṭhas by all sources and it seems probable that they became known as such only in later times, hardly before the thirteenth century CE. As both series those of four pīṭhas and those of 108 Śākta holy places, have different origins it seems possible that they were speaking of different Jalandharas. As these lists are highly theoretical and the information given by the texts being so scarce, it seems better to examine each of the possibilities and to see whether one can draw any conclusions from the material offered by them regarding the location of the pīṭha.

Hsüan tsang describes the town of Jalandhare as the capital of a considerable kingdom.[19] The town must have been of some importance in those times and thus it would not be an unlikely site for important shrines and temples. According to the Gazetteer of the Jalandhara District[20], however, "the only known remains of the ancient city are two tanks which bear the name of Gufa and Brahmakuṇḍa". The reduction of the town by Ibrāhim Shāh of Ghajnā is mentioned in the Dīwān-i-Salmān.[21] May be the old city of Jalandhara was one of the four Śākta pīthas, but this is very difficult to the prove. The Trithāṅka [22] mentions a temple dedicated to Viśvamukhī in the modern town of Jalandhara. But taking the account of the District Gazetteer into consideration, it seems improbable that this is the same Viśvamukhī as mentioned in the list of 108 Śakta holy places. There are however, some other possible locations for the pīṭha Jalandhara.

Cunningham relates several versions of the story of daitya Jālandhara, which differ in the account of his death and the precise location of the Jālandharapiṭha. The story which he heard in 1846, when he first visited the Kangra valley, placed the head of the demon to the north of the Beas, with his mouth at Jvālāmukhī, while his body covered the whole extent of country lying between the Beas and Satluj rivers, his back being beneath the district of Jalandhara and his feet at Multan.[23] This story of Jālandhara, whose body connects a series of places, and whose bodily parts are identified with certain geographical places- the most obvious being the identification of his mouth with Jvālāmukhī reminds one the legend of Satī, whose limbs were dispersed all over India and were the origin of Śākta holy places. Here we may have found a possible location for the pīṭha Jalandhara, but without any success to point out the holy shrine.

Near the modern district of Jālandhara are found the very famous and ancient temples of Jvālāmukhī and Vajreśvarī in the Kangra valley, which should also be regarded as serious claimants for the location of the pīṭha Jalandhara. Abul Fazl's Āin-i- Akbarī, composed about the end of the sixteenth century, contains a description of the piṭha near Nagarkot together with the legend about the origin of the four piṭhas as known to him. He says "Nagarkot is a city situated on a hill; its fort is called Kangra. Near the town is the shrine of Mahāmāyā which is considered as the manifestation of the divinity. Pilgrims from distant part visit it and obtain their desires. Strange it is that in order that their prayers may be favourably heard, they cut their desires. Strange it is that in order that their prayers may be favourably heard, they cut out their tongues; with some it grows again on the spot, with others after one or two daysḤḤ..the remnant (of sati's body) that kept its place is celebrated as Jālandharī which is this particular spot. In the vicinity torch-like flames issue from the ground in some place, and other resemble the blaze of lamps. There is a concourse of pilgrims and various things are caste into the flames with the expectation of obtaining temporal blessings. Over them a domed temple has been erected and an astonishing crowd assembles therein. The vulgar impute to miraculous agency what is simply a mine of brimstone."[24]

According to Sircar, Abūl Fazl speaks of the goddess at Nagarkot- Kangra as Jālandharī which is the same as Jvālāmukhī. The Jalandharapīṭha is now located near Jvālāmukhī.[25] But Abūl Fazl, in his description distinguishes two temples: one of Mahāmāyā at Kot Kangra, where pilgrims cut out their tongues, and another one in its vicinity, which is built over flames that issue from the ground. The latter temple is obviously of Jvālāmukhī. He appears to connect Mahāmāyā and Jālandharī.

The first temple mentioned by Abūl Fazl can be identified with the shrine of Vajreśvarī, of which Cunningham says: "In the suburb of BhawanḤḤ stands the famous temple of Vajreśvarī Devī, more commonly known as Matādevī. This is the holy shrine that was desecrated by Mahmūd of Ghazna, and restored by the Hindus during the reign of Modūd. It was again desecrated by Muhammad Tughalaq, but a few years later it was restored a second time just before the capture of Kot Kangra by his successor Firoz Toughlaq. A third desecration took place about CE 1540, when the fort was captured by Khawās Khān, the General of Sher Shāh . It was again repaired by Raja Dharma Candra in the beginning of the reign of AkbarḤ the old stone temple, which is said to have been built by Sansar Candra I about CE 1440 during the reign of Muhammad Shāh of Delhi, is now entirely concealed under a

modern brick building erected by Desā Singh, The Sikh governor of Kangra. The style is that of a modern dwelling house, with the exception of the bulb-shaped Mughal dome, which was afterwards gilded by Chānd Kuar, the wife of Sher SinghḤḤ."[26].

According to Cunningham, the temple at Kot Kangra is quite old, as it was desecrated by Mahmūd of Ghaznā. In the time of Mahmūd (CE 1008), if Firishta is to be at all credited, the riches of the temple were enormous. The treasure carried off by Mahmūd is stated to have been 700,000 golden dinār, 700 mans of gold and silver plate, 200 mans of pure gold ingots, 2,000 mans of unwrought silver, and 20 mans of jewels[27]. The famous earthquake of Kangra on April 4 in 1905 raised the temple to the ground [28] but the temple, which fell a victim to the earthquake, was not of very great age. It has again been built by 1930.

Firishta (CE 1570-1612) states that "the people of Nagarkot told Firoz (in CE 1360) that the idol which the Hindus worshipped in the temple of Nagarkot was the image of Nowshaba, the wife of Alexander the Great, and that conqueror had left the idol with them, which the brahmanas had made at the time that conqueror was in those parts and placed within their temple, and now that image was the idol of the people of this country. The name by which it was then known was Jvālāmukhī" [29]. In this account Firishta has confounded two different goddesses, the great Mātādevī of Nagarkot and Jvālāmukhī. Shams-i-Sirāj 'Afif, who derived his information from his own father, who accompanied Firoz, more correctly states that the idol Jvālāmukhī, much worshipped by the infidels, was situated in the road to Nagarkot.[30] Thevenot, a French traveler in CE 1666' says, "There are two pagodas of great reputation in (Himachal), the one at Nagarkot, and the other at Jvālāmukhī, but that of Nagarkot is far more famous than the other, because of the idol Mātā, to which it is dedicated, and they say that there are some gentiles, that come not out of that pagoda without sacrificing part of their body. The devotion which the gentiles make show of at the pagoda of Jvālāmukhī, proceeds from this, that they look upon it as a great miracle, that the water of the town which is cold, springs out of a rock, that continually belches out flames. That rock of Jvālāmukhī, is of the mountain of Balaghat, and the Brahmans who govern the pagoda make great profit of it."[31]

The Gazetteer of the Kangra District describes the Jvālāmukhī temple thus, " It is plain outside in the modern Muslim styles of plaster and paint, with a gilt dome and gilt pinnacles presented by the Sikh king Ranjit Singh in 1815. The root is also gilt inside, but the gilding is obscured by smoke. The finest part of the building is the splendid folding door of silver plates, which was presented by Khaṛak Singh, son of the Sikh king Ranjit Singh.

The interior of the temple consists of a square pit about 8 feet deep with a pathway all round. In the middle the rock is slightly hollowed out about the principal fissure, and on applying a light the gas bursts into flames. The gas escapes at several other points from the crevices of the walls on the sides of the pit. But the gas collects very slowly, and the attendant brahmanas when pilgrims are numerous, keep up the flames by feeding them with *ghi*. There is no idol of any kind, the flaming fissure being considered as the fiery mouth of the goddess," [32] R.N. Cust found the building of the temple 'solid and substantial' in October 1846, and observed that 'the naptha-flames were bursting from the ground in the *sanctum sanctorum*. There was no possibility of deception there, as an ordinary natural phenomenon had been transformed by the population into a deity'.[33] In 1812 Walter Hamilton found there a small temple about 20 feet square paved with large stones, and from a hole in one corner there issued a constant flame, which when at the lowest rose about 18 inches; but in the rainy season it issued with great violence, flame bursting from several parts of the floor, and also from places beyond the limits of the temple'.[34] The temple is set against a cliff and forms a fissure from which comes a natural inflammable gas which accounts for the "Eternal Fire". This shrine reportedly withstood the earthquake in 1905; not, however, without serious injury (fig 2).

The adoration of the goddess Jvalāmukhī seems to go back a long way in history. There can be little doubt that from very remote times the spot was held sacred. The *Mahabharata* [35] mentions the Gaurisikhara on which a *stanakunda* (breast tank) was situated; and there are at least six *kuṇḍas* of hot water at Jvālāmukhī. However, the Śakta texts generally associate the Jihvā (tongue) of Sati with this holy place.[36] The *stana* of Sati is associated with Jālandharapīṭha in the Śakta works, which variously describe the presiding goddess as Caṇḍi, Viśvamukhī, or Tripurmālini. The Brihannīlatantra, however, calls Devī as Jvalāmukhī at Jalandharapiṭha. In the Sādhanamālā[37] we find a *sādhanā* called the "Jvalāmukhīsādhanā. A thirteenth century description of Jvālāmukhī records: "To the left and to the right there are two big rivers which in their course meet; here along the bend of a mountain spur in the shape of a sleeping elephant is the town of Naga Kotre with five thousands inhabitants. On the spur of that mountain there is a great temple called Dsa va la mn gi in which both believers and unbelievers offer their worship. Thirty villages are in charge of this temple." [38] Another proof for the relative antiquity of Jvalāmukhī is given by an inscription of CE 1433-46 attached to the temple of Vajreśvari, which opens with the lines: "*Om svasti, Om namo Jvalāmukhīyai*,".[39]

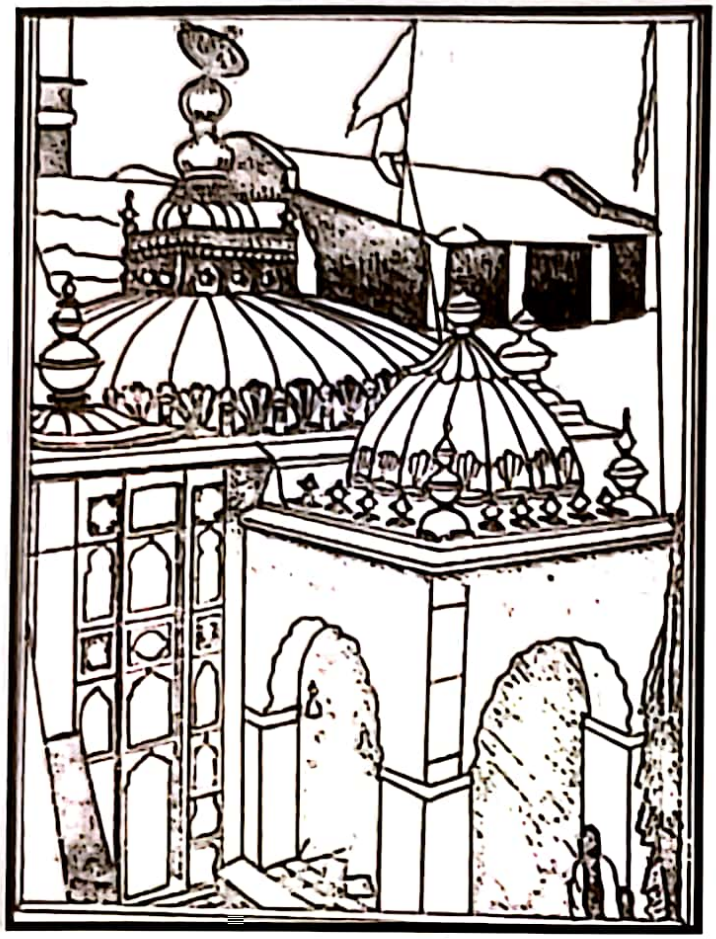

Fig.2: Shrine of Jvālāmukhī Devī

So here we have two temples, some 32 km apart, one of which is unanimously said to be dedicated to Jvālāmukhī, while the other has varying names-Mahāmāyā, Vajreśvari, Mātādevī. Their existence can be traced back many hundreds of years and they are still important centres for Devī worshippers. Abul Fazl says that the seat of Jālandharī was in Nagarkot. The location of the pitha Jalandhrar in a mountainous area at both the shrines of Nagarkot and Jvālāmukhī would also tally with the description given by the Kālikā Purāṇa which states that the residence of Caṇḍi is situated on Jālaśaila. All this makes a strong case for the location of the pitha being in this area, but it must be admitted that we are not sure which of the two shrines be regarded as the Jalandharapitha . Vajreśvari, invoked as Ādi Bhavānī of Nagarkot in her āratī, seems to be presiding goddess of Kot Kangra, a city which possibly dates back to late Gupta period. It may be pointed out that the "concept of Nagara devatā had its beginning in the per-Current era and it had continued to linger on for centuries together." [40] On the other hand, the cult of Jvālāmukhī was widely prevalent. In Uttar Pradesh temples traditionally dedicated to Jvālāmukhī are found at Sohawal, 20 KM from the Fyzabad district headquarters; at Manikpur on the Ganga, 70 KM west of Allahabad, in the Pratapgarh district, and at Ruruganj in the Etawah district. A temple, enshrining Jvālpādevī, on the right

bank of the Western Nayara river in the Pauri district, commands much veneration in the Grahwal region,[41] A Sanskrit school is attached to it. A dharmaśālā and a tourist lodge are there for the visitors. The Kharwar tribe of the southern Mirzapur (now Sonbhadra) district worships Jvalamunkhi Devī, her shrine is located at Kota in the Singrauli valley.[42] In the district of Aligarh and adjoining areas also she is held in reverence by people. The jets of inflammable gas spring from the ground at Baku on the Caspian Sea in Ukrain and at Muktināth on the source of the river Gaṇḍaki in Nepal. The temple of Baku has thus been described by Stewart, who visited it in 1866, "for ages a so-called everlasting fire had been kept burning and watched by Hindu priests from India- the spot where the gas rose from the ground had been enclosed by a wall, and a small temple built in the midst. Around the wall were cells for the priests who attended the fire, and also for Hindu visitors who came here after visiting the temple of Jvālāmukhī in the Kangra district of the Punjab". [43] The Hindus called this temple Baṛī Jvālājī. The temple had quaint inscriptions. One Vāval got his visit recorded in Persian in 1158 AH/CE 1745. During the last days of Muslim rules in India some holy men from Punjab had also etched Gurumukhī inscriptions on the walls of temple. Local Indian merchants contributed towards its upkeep. Sometimes a solitary Hindu sādhu resided at the temple in the midst of a heep of ashes. Though the existing building of the temple was of comparatively recent construction, the site was of immemorial antiquity (Fig.3). During his next visit in 1881, Stewart found "the fire out and no priest" [44] It was finally destroyed by the Russian government before 1935,[45] because of its location within the Surukhaneh petroleum refinery. Jvālājī gombā at Muktināth, where a kind of typical sacred stone called Śāligrāma symbolizing Viṣṇu is found abundantly, was originally a Buddhist shrine now a Hindu temple (Fig 4). The present shrine,

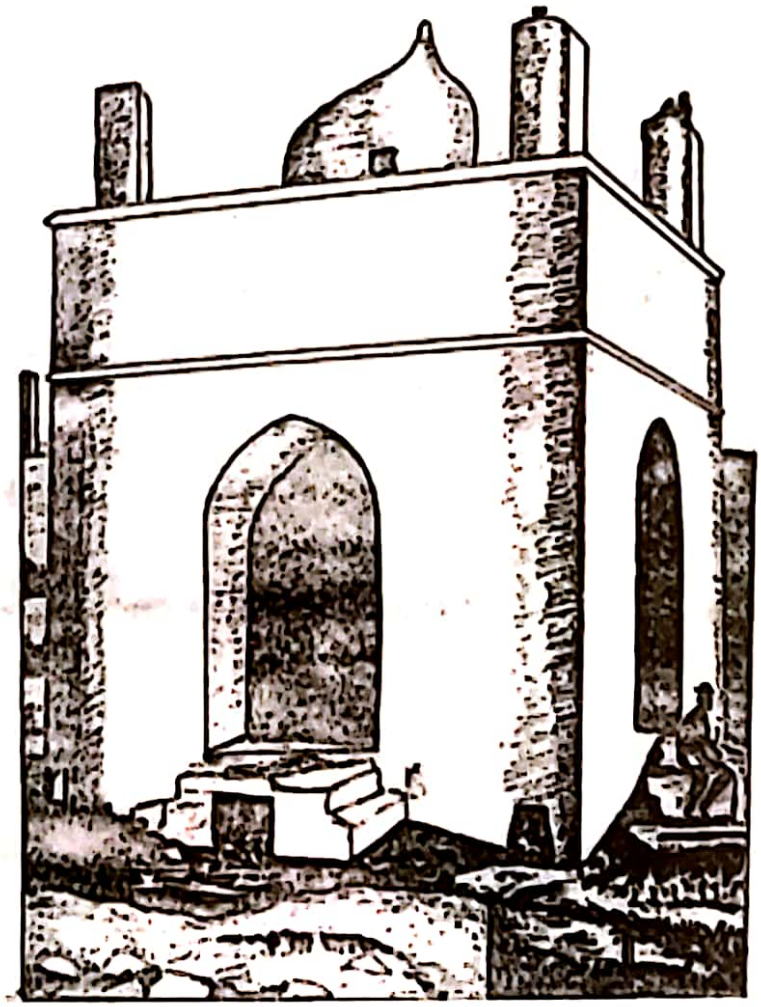

Fig.3. The Fire temple at Baku,1866

a result of many renovations, contains five images of Buddhist association. Snellgrove describes it thus, "Nying-ma-pa contains images of 'Boundless light', Glancing Eye', and 'Lotus Baru'. The flames of natural gas burn in a little cave at floor level in the far right-hand corner. One does indeed burn from earth' one burns just besides a little spring ('from water'), the one' from stone' exhausted itself two years ago."[46] The Hindus consider it the pitha of Gaṇḍaki where the presiding Goddess is Caṇḍi. A look at the map (Fig.5) shows these three holy sites of eternal fire on a line, Jvālāmukhī being in the middle; possibly some geological formation is responsible for this natural phenomenon.

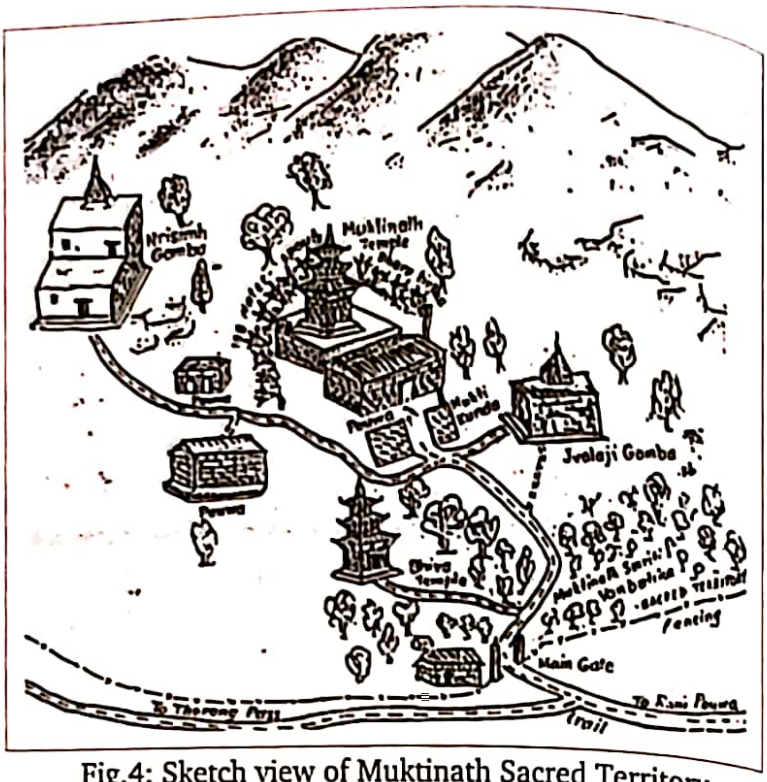

Fig.4: Sketch view of Muktinath Sacred Territory

Fig.5: Holy sites of Eternal fire

Pilgrimages

Devī pilgrimage remains largely a local or sub-regional phenomenon. However, her cult is by no means on the decline, for there are several examples of fairs and pilgrimages that are flourishing or even growing in popularity. Lying in the beautiful meandering valleys with slopes covered with pine and typical temperate mountain flora, the shrines of Himachal attract lakhs of devotees every year. The formulations of a typology for Devī shrines is not straight forward. The numerous manifestation of a typology for Devī shrines is not straight-forward. The numerous manifestations of Devī are not as clearly differentiated as the incarnations of Viṣṇu. They are given a

bewildering variety of names and cross-identifications. In his study of Hindu pilgrimage places Bhardwaj[47] has surveyed the five Devī Shrines located in Himachal Pradesh, the most important temples being at Kangra (Vajreśvari) and Jvālāmukhī. Many pilgrims visiting one or both of these temples may also pay their respects to one or more of three others in the region, namely Nayanā Devī, Manasā Devī and Cintapūrṇi Devī. Each of these five temples has three sets of fairs which are held during both navarātris and on the *aṣṭami* of the dark fortnight of *Śrāvaṇa* month, the latter being of little importance at the two main temples but is the main fair at the shrine of Cintapūrṇi Devī.

Tradition determines which fair is most popular at which temple among pilgrims from any area. Jvālāmukhī was found to attract the highest proportion of scheduled castes, perhaps because it is the only major sacred place in the region where animal sacrifice is allowed within the temple precincts. The Kangra temple attracts Hindi and Punjabi speaking pilgrims from the Delhi area and the Doab region of western Uttar Pradesh, as well as local devotees from the Kangra area. Jvālāmukhī attracts people from the same area, but with a lower proportion of pilgrims sometimes from Bengal. In terms of caste and social background the pilgrims visiting these two shrines were less diverse than those who go to such all-India level places as Haridwar and Ujjain, hence they are ranked by Bhardwaj as regional level sacred places. Nayanā Devī attracts pilgrims mainly from the Punjab speaking area since her cult is confined to certain districts of Punjab, thus she is classified as being of sub-regional level shrine. Cāmuṇḍā Devī is the object of veneration by local population mainly. This suggested classification proves a model for dealing with pilgrimage sites in general, but the question remains as to how to typify the various kinds of Devī Shrines operating at the different local and regional levels.

The motivations for understanding a pilgrimage to Devī shrines are fairly standard (desire for a son, marriage, a good harvest, prosperity, favourable court judgment, and similar issues of personal rather than spiritual importance) and folk songs sung by the pilgrims generally praise her as granting desired objects and removing misfortunes. On his initial visit the pilgrim makes a vow (manautī) that if his wish is granted he will return again with a suitable offering or sacrifice, perhaps bringing more members of his family or completing the last stage of his pilgrimage by prostrating himself all the way. Devotees also bring their children to Devī shrine to have their hair shorn for the first time. Summarising the caste of the pilgrims, Bhardwaj has concluded that the higher the level of holy place the higher the

proportion of virtually high caste pilgrims and the more general the purpose of the visit. Lower castes distinctly prefer worship of Devī. He has also noted that commitment to a vow was more important for the lower level shrines. Sikhs also visit Śakta shrines, regarding Devī as a problem solving device, despite the fact that orthodox Sikhism discourage idolatry. Nayanā Devī is popular among all the communities- Hindus, Sikhs, Christians and Muslims. At the shrines of all the "Seven Sisters", the question of animal sacrifice is an ambiguous one. Priests and devotees recognize that the goddess is fierce and blood-thirsty as well as benevolent and protective. Yet the practice of animal sacrifice is rapidly dying out, being replaced by Vaiṣṇava-type vegetarian offerings. Betel nuts and leaves, vermillion, bangles, saffron flags, and coconuts are generally offered to all Devīs. The offering of coconuts at Devī shrines is explained by a charter myth in which the devotee Dhyānu Bhagat cuts off his own head and offers it to the goddess Jvālāmukhī who promises that henceforth she will accept coconut offering instead. Sleeping on cots, drinking and eating meat are totally forbidden in the shrine precinets of Cintapūrṇi Devī. The main offering there is the icon of Devī herself. The hereditary priests of the shrines of Jvālāmukhī and Kangra Devī are called Bhojakis, the term Bhojakī possibly being the corrupt form of Pūjakī (worshipper). They have grown into a distinct caste, though composed originally of a mixed collection of many castes. The Gazetter of the Kangra District records, "They all wear the sacred thread, they intermarry among themselves alone, eat flesh, drink wine, and are debauched and profligate set; the men are constantly in the courts involved in litigation, and the women are notorious for their loose morality".[48] The smaller shrines are attended by priests commonly referred to as Jogī or Gosain who are interiors of a degenerate version of practices propagated by the Nāthasampradāya. The Nāthas are an unorthodox group of Saivite mendicants who are found in fairly large numbers in the Punjab-Kangra area. They have close connection with the goddess cult in the area and even have rights to part of the temple of Jvālāmukhī.

Conclusion

Historically Śaktism in Himachal developed under the grab of Śaivism. But independent Śaktism made its appearance in the post-Gupta age, and Devī, in her developed from absorbed innumerable goddess representing different traditions of Devī worship. The period which marked the transition from ancient to medieval was characterized, especially in North West India, by the installation of numerous Devī temple dedicated to different forms of the goddess, mainly Mahiṣamardinī. The

coincides with the beginning of the Muslim inroads around that region. India was fragmented and disunited. All the religious communities of India had to face the disastrous impact of the destructive onslaughts of Islam. This compelled them to unite upon a common platform, and one of the principal emotional bonds of their union was provided by the consolidation of Śakti-worship. Śakti, as 'power' or energy' incarnate as female principle, aroused bright divine blessings against the dark background of the Muslim raids. During the late medieval period Guru Govind Singh's insistence on the doctrine of Śakti was not due to his inclination towards Śaktism as a religion, but to his understanding of the spirit of Śaktism in terms of the cult of power which the Sik society needed for its consolidation as a nation around the political cult of ani-Muslim militancy. The same spirit was shared by Śiva ji whose favourite goddess was Bhavānī. Thus, side by side with the benign conception of the goddess, her conception as the embodiment of owner, symbolized by her demon killing form, came into prominence during the period from the eight to seventeenth century. This was possibly the reason for the wide spread worship of Śakti in Himachal Pradesh falling in north west India which was more prone to Muslim invasions than any other part of the country. Royal patronage also played a major part in the transformation of local goddess shrines into acknowledged centres of Śaktism, and the latte's rapid spread over the Punjab-Himachal region. For instance, the Gurjara Pratihara rules of Kanauj (eight-ninth centuries) were acclaimed devotees of the goddess Bhagavati, and they had their sway over some parts of Himachal comprising of Kangra, Kinnaur, Kullu and Chamba, a fact supported by the Pratihara inscriptions, the *Rājataraṅgiṇī* the *Kāvyamīmānsā* and the art style.

To sum up Śakti has been exerting her tremendous influence on the life of people in Himachal from the remote past. Her representation starts from mere vermillion marked stone slabs and ends in a finely built anthropomorphic form, in stone or in metal, characterized by the great Hindu tradition. In some villages, she is worshipped under a tree in a comparatively lonely surrounding, and in others, she is installed in a stone-built or wooden temple in the very heart of the village. Through the long spell of intermixture of Great and Little Traditions, she represents herself in variegated forms and multi dimensional orientations. Among all the manifestations of Śakti, however, Mahiṣamardinī is the most popular one from the point of view of worship as well as sculpture. The religion of the common people of Himachal seems to have been based on the Purāṇic version of the Śakti cult, so widely known and

practiced in this region during the entire medieval period. The naming pattern of numerous villages indicates that she has penetrated into the very recess of the life of people. She governs people, guides people, and helps them in tiding over crises specially these beyond the control of the ordinary power of man. Even after a great length of time, her influence over the masses is not mutilated or eradicated. Despite the broad-based changes in life pattern affected through the impact of modernism, the shrines of Devī in Himachal maintain their indigenous folk-beliefs, ways of adoration, and manners and customs, though with some inevitable changes.

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An Interesting Image of Balarama from Saho, Chamba: An Analysis

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Chamba, Himachal Pradesh, has produced number of images over the course of past many centuries. Their technical finesse and distinct style has attracted numerous scholars resulting into number of articles and books which dwell upon various aspects of the sculptures of Chamba[1]. Despite valuable contribution by the scholars few gaps are still required to be filled through extensive and detailed study. This may help us to properly view and locate them in the entire picture of the sculptures of western Himalaya and can throw some welcome light on the art of Chamba. There are some sculptures, discovered recently which need to be examined and analysed properly.

Balarama being the prominent deity in Vaisnavism finds mention in various literary texts such as the Agnipurana, Vaikhanasagama, Vishnupurana, Harivamsa, etc. These texts tell us about the character of Balarama, his iconographic traits and other aspects. Balarama had important place in the Pancharatra and Bhagavata schools of thought[2]. He is considered as the 8th incarnation amongst the ten incarnations of Vishnu. The incorporation of Balarama as one of the incarnation of Vishnu is in itself apparent to reveal the importance of the deity. Balarama is associated with the Naga cult as he is manifestation of serpent Sesha[3]. The *Mahabharata* and the *Harivamsa* confirms this. Often he is depicted with polycephalous serpent hood above his head[4]. The deity's other famous names are Sankarshana, Balabhadra and Baladeva. The deity is also revered in the Jaina faith as an associate of Neminatha[5]. Among the weapons, Plough and pestle are associated with Balarama. In the Pancharatra School his colour is mentioned as white and he should carry pestle and plough. The *Vaikhanasagama* and the *Vishnudharmottara Purana* also mention plough and pestle in his hands[6]. The name of his *hala* is Sunanda and *musala* is Samavartaka. His *hala* with divine garland is compared with the king of the serpents[7]. The *Agnipurana* describes two handed Balarama as holding *hala* and *gada* as the deity is adept in *gadayuddha*[8]. Other than pestle and mace, other emblems depicted in his hands are conch, lotus, flask of wine and bow. The *Agni-purana* mentions *chakra* in the front right hand of Balarama while holding *musala* in the back right hand and plough and conch in back left hand and the front left hand respectively[9]. The deity is fond of drinking wine, often he is shown holding glass/goblet of wine in one of his hands invariably in one of the front hands when shown four handed[10]. Revati is the wife of

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Balarama and sometimes she is depicted as holding wine jar to accompany her husband in the act of drinking[11]. She also holds lotus flower in her right hand[12]. *Mukuta* is nowhere mentioned for Balarama however it is mentioned in several texts that he should be depicted like Vishnu[13], this implies the presence of mukuta for Balarama. According to the *Harivamsa, Vishnu-purana* and the *Brihatsamhita*, the deity wears earring only in his left ear[14]. The *Vishnudharmottara-Purana* does not mention the exact number. *Ekavali* finds mention in the *Samavayanga sutra* as *ekavalikantha-layiya-vachcha*[15]. Various literary works such as the *Harivamsa* and the *Vishnudharmottara* mention Balarama wearing vanamala, a characteristic trait associated with Vishnu[16]. Balarama is generally depicted two handed or four handed however his more than four handed images can also be seen.

Balarama is one of the important deities in Vaishnavism, but sometimes he is also associated with the Jain religion[17]. An interesting stone image of Balarama was discovered from Saho, a nondescript hamlet, some twenty km. from Chamba, the district headquarters of the same name (plate-1). The four handed image is in bad state of preservation and is quite worn out due to wear and tear that makes it difficult to ascertain all the details. He is standing in abhanga posture as the weight of the body is equal on both legs[18]. The deity's left leg is slightly advanced. Balarama is wearing diaphanous dhoti, a bracelet in his proper back right hand. Single pointed mukuta adorns his head. He is wearing ekavali which is worn out to a great extant. He also wears vanamala, reaching down below knees. The sculpture is in high relief as it is attached to the back slab. The face is modelled in round. Above the head seven hooded polycephalous snake is depicted, resembling a halo. In the sculpture of Balarama from Saho and another sculpture of Balarama, recently discovered at Mugla (plate-2), a small village near Chamba, the polycephalous snake at the back has same number of heads, which corresponds to the Balarama sculptures discovered in Kashmir[19].

Balarama image from Saho wears a karnaphula in his left ear[20], an iconographic trait mentioned in various literary texts like the Harivamsa, Vishnu-Purana and the Brihatsamhita. At the base, the deity is flanked by two attendant figures. The one on the proper right side is male and the one on the proper left is female. These attendant figures are half human and half serpent as the lower part of their bodies are coiled, to show their serpent aspect. The one on the proper right side has some indistinct object in his hands, raised up to the level of his chest in reverence. He is looking up towards the deity and his head is covered by a snake's hood. The figure on the deity's proper left, as mentioned before is female though her face is

badly damaged but from her stance, it is clear that like the other attendant figure, she is also looking upward towards the deity. Her right hand is akimbo and in her left hand she is holding some indiscernible object, which is in front. Her head too, is covered by a snake's hood. These figures are Balarama's subordinates as their hands are folded in reverence or perhaps they are other chieftains of the Naga clan as suggested by N.P. Joshi in the context of sculptures of Balarama from Mathura[21].

V.C. Ohri compares the image, on the basis of the modelling and stance, with the Vishnu Vaikuntha image in the main temple of the Lakshminarayana Temple complex[22]. On the basis of simple comparison of the stance and modelling of Balarama image with the Lakshminarayana image he had given the date of 10th century CE. He may be right in giving the 10th century CE date to the Balarama image but the argument he puts forth to corroborate his point is insubstantial. Moreover, Ohri's dating is not tenable because marble images did not come into existence as early as 10th cent in Himachal. Therefore the dating of the Lakshminarayana image is much later than the 10th century CE. Mahesh Sharma has assigned the Lakshminarayana image to 16th century CE[23]. Suggestion of a date for the Balarama image as late as Lakshminarayana image is not possible as stylistic characteristics suggests early date. Therefore V.C. Ohri's comparison based dating of Balarama image stands tenuous. Ohri did not mention that whether the image is four handed or it is a two handed image. Neither has he mentioned the presence of subordinate naga figures below nor does he bring under scrutiny the seven hooded polycephalous snake. While comparing the two images Ohri states that "the only difference, noticed in them is in respect of the treatment of the waist" he again misunderstood and wrongly states the differences as there are more differences between the two and the stance which he finds common in both the images is actually not and has difference as Lakshminarayana image's stance is tribhanga than the Balarama image and the torso of the Lakshminarayana image is longer in comparison. Therefore Ohri cursorily discusses the Balarama image while missing out many important details.

S.M. Sethi has observed that Balarama is wearing earrings, however, a close examination reveals that the deity is wearing it only in his left ear in consonance with some ancient texts like the Harivamsa, Vishnu-Purana, etc. Sethi states that the deity is flanked by the snake tailed consorts but Revati is wife of Balarama and his snake tailed consorts are not mentioned in any ancient text, furthermore the subordinate figure on the proper right of the deity is male contrary to the Sethi's identification of this figure as Balarama's consort. Therefore they could be the representations of his

subordinate figures or the representations of chieftains of Naga clan. Sethi writes that the objects held in his hands are indistinct but he fails to point out the plough in the back right hand of the deity which is quite clear. Sethi rightly ascribes 10th Century CE date to this image[24] but he did not dwell upon the characteristic details of the sculpture nor did he follow comparative approach to establish the date and other aspects. Sethi says that raja Sahilla Verman, founder of the Chamba town, introduced major Gods of Hindu pantheon and Balarama had to beat a retreat in Chamba but Chamba town was founded by Raja Sahilla Verman and we do not have any earlier evidence of worship of Balarama or any other brahamanical god from Chamba town, and at Bharmour, located 40 miles to the south east of Chamba, presence of major gods of the Hindu pantheon is a very well known fact.

The carving of the sculpture is in the Gangetic idiom and the body is well proportionate and tightly modelled. Balarama is also represented in the Jain pantheon along with 22nd tirthankara, Neminatha. However here the deity's association with Jainism is unlikely as no trace of Jain influence has come to light from the Chamba region so far. Various texts like the Agni-Purana, Harivamsa, Vaikhanasagama, Vishnu-Purana, etc. throw light on the iconography of Balarama. All these literary sources describe Balarama as holding plough in his left hand. In keeping with this description, invariably in the sculptures of Balarama, from Gangetic plains, the plough is depicted in the left hand. However, the Saho Balarama holds the plough, in his proper right back hand. There is a bronze image of Balarama in seated position from Kashmir[25], found in Ladakh, it has similar arrangement of the plough. This Kashmir image is comparatively well preserved and the objects held in his other hands are as follows. Going clockwise from the back right hand he holds a plough, as already mentioned, a club, a conch and a lotus. This arrangement of the attributes and the position of the hands help us, though not definitively to decipher the indistinct objects in the hands of the Balarama image from Saho. The latter's back left hand is raised upward to the shoulder, though the object is abraded but the position of the hand suggests the presence of a club. Balarama, when represented four handed, is always shown holding plough and club/pestle in his back hands therefore there is no reservation that the indistinct object in his back left hand is a musala as the one in the back right is a hala. The object in the proper right hand gives the faint suggestion of a goblet as Balarama's fondness for wine is well-known and in many sculptures he is shown holding goblet/wine cup. Balarama is wearing karnaphula in his left ear which is in accordance with some ancient texts like the

Harivamsa, Vishnu-Purana, Brihatsamhita etc. The deity is broad-chested with narrow waist and athletic body, he is wearing single pointed crown. As already mentioned that on the deity's below right a half male, half serpent subordinate figure is present, on close observation one can see that the figure is wearing bracelet like ornament in the left hand. His hands are folded in reverence as he looks upward towards the deity. He is holding some indistinct object in both of his hands. On the opposite side half female half serpent figure is shown whose right arm is akimbo and left is in front, holding some utensil like object. In some medieval sculptures Balaram's wife Revati is depicted with a jar in her hands as she stands beside the deity[26]. Balarama drinking in the company of his wife finds mention in literary works.

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3. Rao, T. A. Gopinatha, Elements of Hindu Iconography, Vol-I, part one, Delhi reprint. 1997, p. 200
4. Banerjea, Jitendra Nath, The Development of Hindu Iconography, New Delhi reprint. 2002, p. 423
5. Joshi, N. P., Iconography of Balarama, New Delhi 1979, p. 29
6. Singh, Sheo Bahadur, Brahamanical Icons in Northern India, New Delhi 1977, p. 92
7. हलं सवर्तकं नाम सौनन्दं मुसलं तथा
   धनुशा प्रवर शार्ङग गदा कौमोदकी तथा ।। 60 ।।
   चत्वार्येतानि तेजांसि विश्णुप्रहरणानि च
   ताभ्यां समवर्तीर्णानि यादवाभ्यां महामृधे।।
   जग्राह प्रथम रामो ललाम प्रतिमं हलम्
   सपन्नमिव सर्पेन्द्रं दिव्यमालाकुलं मृधे।।
   सौनन्दं च ततः श्रीमान् निरानन्दकर द्विशाम्
   सव्येन सात्वतां श्रेश्ठो जग्राह मुसलोत्तमम्।।
   As quoted by N.P. Joshi, op. cit., p. 93
8. Mahabharata, Salya Parva, 60, 2
9. Rao, T. A. Gopinatha, op. cit., p. 201
10. Joshi, N. P., op. cit , p. 36
11. ibid, p 49
12. Rao, T. A. Gopinatha, op. cit., p. 202
13. Joshi, N. P., op.cit., p. 39
14. ibid, pp. 39-40
15. ibid, p. 40
16. ibid, p. 41

17. Ibid, p. 19
18. I am indebted to Professor Ashvini Agrawal for helping me in the identification of the posture.
19. Cf. Bhan J.L. Kashmir Sculptures, New Delhi 2010
20. I am grateful to Professor Ashvini Agrawal for helping me identify the ornament in the left ear.
21. Joshi, N. P., op. cit., p. 52
22. Ohri, V.C., op. cit., pp. 93-96
23. Sharma Mahesh,"The Lakshmi-Narayana Image and Vaishnavism in Chamba: Evidence, Context and Chronology" Legacy of Indian Art : Continuity in Change, ed. Ashvini Agrawal, New Delhi 2009, However we prefer to assign this image to c. 13th -14th century CE on the basis of its iconographical Features.
24. Sethi, S.M., A Catalogue of Stone Sculpture in the Museum of Himachal Pradesh, Shimla 2002, p 99
25. Bhan J.L., op.cit., pp. 468-69
26. Joshi N. P., op. cit., p. 49

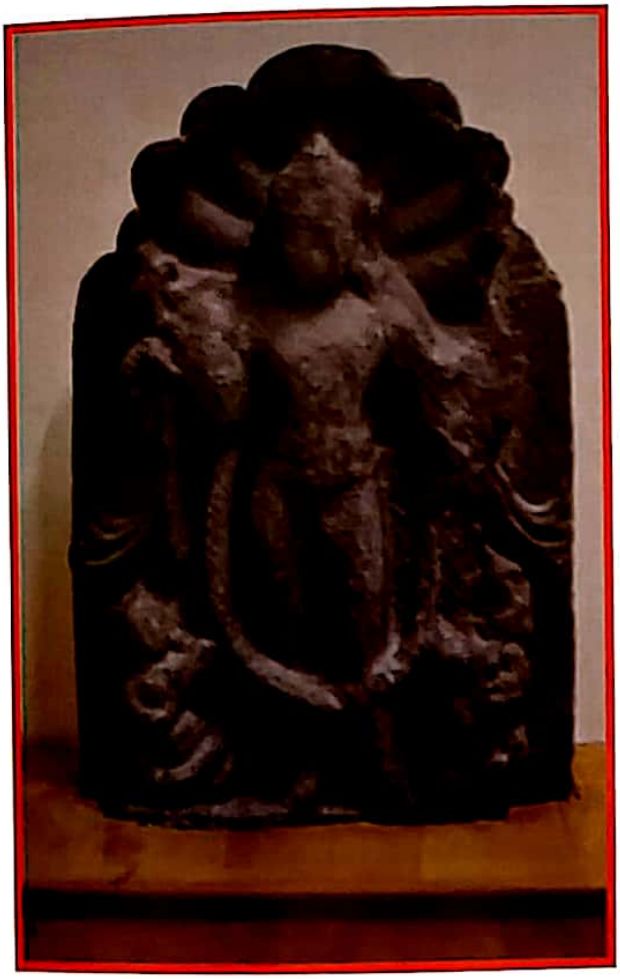

Plate-I, Balarama

Plate-II, Balarama

उत्तराखण्ड में अवस्थित विष्णु प्रतिमाएँ

डॉ० संजीव कुमार जुगल*

वैष्णव धर्म प्राचीन भारतीय धर्मो में से एक है। इस धर्म के आराध्य देव विष्णु का सर्वप्रथम वर्णन हमें ऋग्वेद में मिलता है। ऋग्वेद में विष्णु के सम्बन्ध में अल्प सूक्त ही प्राप्त होते हैं तथा उन्हें इन्द्र के भाई उपेन्द्र भी कहा गया है। उत्तर वैदिक काल आते–आते विष्णु नामक देवता का महत्त्व बढ़ गया। इस काल में इस देवता को ऐहिक, नैतिक शक्ति का मूल, कष्ट में मानव का उद्धारक एवं देवताओं का तारक माना गया है, इस कारण विष्णु को देवों में सबसे अधिक प्रतिष्ठित एवं श्रेष्ठ माना जाने लगा। इसके अतिरिक्त संत तथा ऋषियों के जीवन का लक्ष्य भी विष्णु के चरणों की प्राप्ति हो गयी थी।

विष्णु का सर्वप्रथम वर्णन वैदिक कालीन ग्रंथों से प्राप्त होता है। वेदों में प्राचीन ऋग्वेद में विष्णु का 93 बार उल्लेख हुआ है। विष्णु ने इन्द्र के साथ मिलकर वृत नामक असुर का संहार कर सोमरस का पान किया। इसके अतिरिक्त वेदों मे विष्णु को प्रकाश से भी सम्बन्धित किया गया है, जिसके कारण उसे सूर्य के आश्रित के रूप में पहचाना गया है। ऋग्वेद में विष्णु को इस धरती के सम्वर्द्धन के लिए किये गये कार्यों के लिए जाना जाता है। ऋग्वेद के विष्णु सूक्त (1/154) में कहा गया है कि, विष्णु ने अपने प्रथम एवं द्वितीय पाद् से पृथ्वी तथा आकाश को पूर्ण किया तथा तीसरे पाद् से सम्पूर्ण ब्रह्माण्ड को नाप लिया, यही अन्तिम स्थान विष्णु लोक के रुप में पहचाना जाने लगा (ऋग्वेद 1/22/ 20)। तैत्तिरीय आरण्यक के पुरुष सूक्त (3/13/2) में विष्णु को हरि तथा लक्ष्मी का परमेश्वर एवं सर्वश्रेष्ठ देवता के रुप में उल्लेख किया गया है। इसके अतिरिक्त वेदों में उसे देवताओं का प्रमुख (विश्वकर्मा सूक्त 10/82), गर्भ में भूर्ण का रक्षक (वृशाकपि सूक्त 10/81), गर्भवती नारी के गर्भ में सुन्दर शिशु प्रदान करने वाला (वृशाकपि सूक्त 7/26) एवं प्रत्येक जीव का जनक कहा गया है (विश्वकर्मा सूक्त 10/082/06)।

उत्तरवैदिक काल एवं महाकाव्यों में विष्णु एक सर्वश्रेष्ठ देवता के रुप में अभिहीत हो चुका था। पुराणों में वैष्णव एवं शैव धर्म अपनी पराकाश्ठा पर पहुँच चुके थे। इसमें विष्णु के दस अवतार अपनें विभिन्न विशेषताओं को समेटे हुए दिखाये गये हैं। पुराणों के समय में विष्णु का महत्त्व और अधिक बढ़ गया तथा धीरे–धीरे यह विश्वास हो गया था, कि धर्म की प्रतिष्ठा को बचाने एवं अधर्म से मुक्ति के लिए विष्णु बार–बार अवतार लेते हैं। ब्राह्मण काल में विष्णु से सम्बन्धित अनेक कहानियों से उसके विभिन्न क्रियाकलापों का वर्णन प्राप्त होता है तथा एतरेय ब्राह्मण (1:1:1) में उसे सभी देवताओं में श्रेष्ठ कहा गया है।

विष्णु का कला में सर्वप्रथम निरुपण यद्यपि गुप्त काल से प्रारम्भ होता है। किन्तु शुंग काल में निर्मित हेलियोडोरस का गरुड़ स्तम्भ इस धर्म के सम्बन्ध में सूचना देता है। यह स्तम्भ हेलियोडोरस ने भागवत धर्म में आस्था रखते हुए विदिशा के शासक भागभद्र के शासन के 14वें वर्ष में उत्कीर्ण करवाया था (वोगल, 1908/ पृ० 129)। इक्ष्वाकु वंश के शासनकाल में यद्यपि बौद्ध धर्म एवं उससे सम्बन्धित कला का निरुपण प्राप्त होता है, किन्तु इस समय हिन्दू मंदिरों का भी निर्माण हुआ जो कि सम्भवतः दक्षिण एशिया के प्रथम मंदिर होगें। इस वंश द्वारा निर्मित लकडी की आठ भुजाओं वाली विष्णु (जिसे अभिलेखों में

*इतिहास विभाग राजकीय महाविद्यालय नागनाथ पोखरी, चमोली, उत्तराखण्ड

अष्टभुजाधारीविष्णु कहा गया है) को नागार्जुन कोण्डा मंदिर (278 ई०) में रखा गया था (सरकार 1961–62 / पृ० 201)। इसके अतिरिक्त इस काल में निर्मित कोण्डामांडू, आन्ध्र प्रदेश से प्राप्त एक मूर्ति जिसमें कि एक मनुष्य के मुँह को शेर का दिखाया गया है तथा जिसके दो हाथों में चक्र, गदा एवं चार पैर दिखाये गये हैं, विष्णु के इस स्वरूप को अवतार रुप में नृसिंह कहते हैं। इस चित्र में इसके अतिरिक्त पांच पाण्डवों का भी अंकन प्राप्त होता है (हंटिगटन 1993 / पृ० 182)।

गुप्त सम्राट वैष्णव थे। इनके शासनकाल में विष्णु मूर्तियों के अनेक नये शिल्परूप विकसित हुए। इस काल में विष्णु की चतुर्भुजी से अष्टभुजी मूर्तियों का निरूपण किया गया। गुप्त काल में विष्णु की मूर्तियों से सम्बन्धित अनेक उदाहरण यथा–वैकुंठ मूर्ति (यह मूर्ति अमेरिका के बोस्टन संग्रहालय मे है) जिसमें विष्णु के सौम्य मुख के पार्श्वों में वराह एवं नृसिंह मुख का निरुपण प्राप्त होता है। इसके अतिरिक्त विष्णु की विश्वरुप की परिचायक मूर्ति (जिसमें मुख्य सिर के अतिरिक्त अनेक अन्य सिरो का अंकन प्राप्त होता है) गढ़वाल से प्राप्त होती है (मिश्र 1978 / पृ० 126)। गुप्त युग कला की दृष्टि से बड़ा समृद्ध था, जिसका व्यापक स्वरुप तत्कालीन प्रतिमाओं से दृष्टिगत् होता है। इस काल में वैष्णव धर्म का वर्चस्व था तथा विभिन्न आयामों से युक्त अनेक मूर्तियां प्राप्त हुई हैं। गुप्त काल में विष्णु के अवतारों से सम्बन्धित मूर्तियां हमें नृवराह एवं नृसिंह की मूर्तियाँ (जिला सागर) वराह कृति, उदयगिरि, नृसिंह मूर्ति, बेसनगर आदि उल्लेखनीय है। इन मूर्तियों के अतिरिक्त मानवीय अवतारों (राम, कृष्ण) की लीलाओं से सम्बन्धित विभिन्न दृश्य देवगढ, एरण तथा रचना से प्राप्त होते हैं। इन मंदिरों में रामजीवन वृत से सम्बन्धित दृश्यों में राम, सीता एवं लक्ष्मण का वनगमन, अहिल्या का उद्धार, अगस्त्य ऋषि के आश्रम में सत्कार, लोपमुद्रा द्वारा सीता को शिक्षा, सीताहरण, नलनील द्वारा सेतुवंध आदि तथा कृष्ण लीला मे कृष्ण जन्म, देवकी द्वारा वसुदेव को शिशु कृष्ण समर्पण, वसुदेव की कृष्ण सहित गोकुल यात्रा, नंद, यशोदा सहित कृष्ण एवं बलराम, पूतना वध, कंस वध, कृष्ण–सुदामा संवाद आदि का निरुपण मिलता है (मिश्र, 1978 / पृ० 127)। गुप्तयुगीन कला में विष्णु के मूर्तियों को स्थानक, आसन और शयन भेद में निरुपण प्राप्त होता है। स्थानक मूर्तियों में विभिन्न आभूषणों से सुसज्जित किया गया है। आभूषणों की रचना मौलिक है। मौक्तिक जाल से सुसज्जित मुकुट, कंधो पर बिखरी केश–वल्लरी, लंबे कान, गले की एकावली, चन्द्राकार ग्रैवेयक, नागयज्ञोपवीत आदि सज्जा से विष्णु मूर्तियों को प्रदर्शित किया गया है। बंगाल के बैरकगंज से प्राप्त विष्णु की अभिचारिक स्थानक मूर्ति तंत्र पर आधारित छल एवं कपट के प्रयोजन हेतु प्रयुक्त थी। शयन मूर्तियों में देवगढ मंदिर की पार्श्व रथिका पर बनी शेषशायी विष्णु की रचना मोहक है, जिसमें ब्रह्मा ओर लक्ष्मी के अतिरिक्त विष्णु के आयुध पुरुषों का भी अंकन प्राप्त होता है (मिश्र, 1978 / पृ० 128)। इसके अतिरिक्त शयन मूर्तियों में गुफा सं०–13, उदयगिरि, गजेंद्रमोक्ष, देवगढ मंदिर, गुफा सं० 18 का अमृतमंथन, उदयगिरि आदि प्रमुख है (हंटिगटन,1993 / पृ० 182)।

गुप्तोत्तर काल के प्रमुख राजवशों मे कन्नोज के गुर्जर–प्रतिहार और कश्मीर के कर्कोट तथा उत्पल वंश के राजाओं ने शिल्प कला की नयी विधायें विकसित की। यधपि इस काल की मूर्तियो में उत्तर भारतीय गुप्त प्रभाव पूर्णतः लुप्त नही हुआ, किन्तु मूर्तियों में भारीपन, चौड़ाई तथा अलंकरण का सीमित उपयोग प्राप्त होता है (मिश्र, 1978 / पृ० 141)। इस काल को मूर्तियों में विष्णु की वराह एवं विश्वरुप मूर्ति उल्लेखनीय है (दीक्षित, 1955)।

चालुक्य काल मे निर्मित बादामी, कर्नाटक की गुफाओं से वैष्णव धर्म से सम्बन्धित मूर्तियों का निरुपण मिलता है। बादामी के गुफा सं०–3 के बरामदा में विष्णु के शेशशायी एवं वराह का अंकन मिलता है। प्रथम मूर्ति में विष्णु को शेशनाग के ऊपर बैठा दिखाया गया है, जिसके फन विष्णु के ऊपर किये हैं। इस मूर्ति में विष्णु को स्थूल काया तथा वराह मूर्ति को मांसल युक्त शरीर एवं कीचड़ में सने हुए दिखाया गया है। (हटिंगटन, 1993 / पृ० 288)। पल्लव काल में विष्णु की अन्य मूर्तियों के साथ वराह गुफा, मामल्लपुरम से प्राप्त त्रिविक्रम मूर्ति महत्त्वपूर्ण है। त्रिविक्रम अवतार में विष्णु द्वारा असुरों के राजा वाली से तीन पाद में से दो पादों मे क्रमशः पृथ्वी एवं आकाश की नाप तथा अन्त पाद वाली के सिर पर रखा हुआ दिखाया गया है (हंटिगटन / पृ० 298)।

कश्मीर के उत्पल वंश के शासक अवन्तिवर्मन के शासनकाल के समय बनी विष्णु को चार मुख वाली मूर्ति, (जिसे चर्तुभुजी विष्णु प्रतिमा कहते है) जिसे चार तथ्यों को सूचित करता है (वनर्जी,1956 / पृ० 408–10)। इस चर्तुभुजी प्रतिमा में आगे का मुख मनुष्य का है, जबकि वांये एवं दांये मुख क्रमशः सुअर एवं शेर का है, जबकि पीछे की ओर दैत्य का अंकन प्राप्त होता है। इस प्रतिमा में सुअर एवं शेर मुख विष्णु के वराह एवं नृसिंह अवतार को सूचित करते हैं, जबकि मानवीय मुख वासुदेव को सूचित करता है। इस मूर्ति में से मुख क्रमशः विष्णु के संकर्शण (शेर मुख) प्रद्यूमन (सुअर मुख) एवं अनिरुद्ध (दैत्य मुख) को सूचित करता है (हंटिगटन, 1993 / पृ० 366–67) इसके अतिरिक्त बारहवीं शताब्दी ई० की वेरीनाग से प्राप्त चर्तुभुजी विष्णु प्रतिमा उल्लेखनीय है। इस मूर्ति में विष्णु द्वारा ऊपर के हाथों में क्रमशः पदम् एवं शंख धारण किये हुए है, जबकि नीचे के हाथों में उनके आयुधों के मानवीय स्वरुप दिखाये गये हैं। जिसमें गदादेवी स्त्री के रुप में दायें हाथ तथा पुरुष स्वरुप चक्र (चक्रपुरुप) वांये हाथ में दिखाया गया है। इस मूर्ति में विष्णु को धोती पहने हुए दिखाया गया है (हंटिगंटन, 1993 / पृ० 368)।

दक्कन के क्षेत्र में लगभग आठवी सादी के मध्य में राष्ट्रकूट शासक हुए। मान्यखेट के राष्ट्रकूटों के शासनकाल में अनेक मंदिरों का निर्माण हुआ। राष्ट्रकूटों के शासनकाल में ब्राह्मण धर्म के विभिन्न देवी–देवताओं की मूर्तियों का निरुपण मिलता है। जिसके उदाहरण हमें एलोरा की वैष्णव मूर्तियों में लक्ष्मीनारायण, गरुडासन विष्णु, अनंतशायी नारायण, गोवर्धन कृष्ण आदि के विभिन्न स्वरुप प्राप्त होते है (मिश्र, 1978 / पृ० 188)। इसके अतिरिक्त एलोरा के कैलाश मंदिर के भित्ति पर रामायण एवं महाभारत के विभिन्न दृश्यों का अंकन प्राप्त होता है।

खर्ती पल्लव कला की राजसिंह शैली में विष्णु की विभिन्न छवियां इस युग के मंदिरों से प्राप्त होती है। महाबल्लिपुरम् की विष्णु प्रतिमा (राव, फलक–96) तथा तिरुनगरी का चतुर्भुज विष्णु का अर्धचित्र उल्लेखनीय है (ललितकला, 7 फलक 108)। इस शैली की मूर्तियों में विष्णु को श्रंगिल मुकुट, मकर कुंडल, नागवंद्य प्रकार का केयूर और यज्ञोपवीत आदि से सुसज्जित किया गया है। वस्त्राभूषणों में किरीट मुकुट, कुंडल, विस्तृत ग्रेवेयक, केयूर, उदरपट्ट, यज्ञोपवीत मेखला से झूलते हुए वस्त्र पट्ट एवं उत्तरीय उल्लेखनीय हैं। बंगाल एवं बिहार में पाल, सेन काल के समय मूर्तियों में विष्णु एक प्रमुख विषय रहा। जिसका निरूपण मूर्ति में त्रिविक्रम के रूप में प्राप्त होता है। इस त्रिविक्रम मूर्तियों में पाल काल में निर्मित विष्णु त्रिविक्रम वलूरघाट, पश्चिम बंगाल से प्राप्त पाषाण मूर्ति तथा विक्रमपुरा बंगालदेश से प्राप्त कांसे की मूर्ति जो कलकत्ता संग्रहालय में सुरक्षित हैं, उल्लेखनीय मूर्तियां हैं। कांसे की त्रिविक्रम मूर्ति में विष्णु को विभिन्न अलंकरणों से सुसज्जित करने के साथ–साथ लक्ष्मी एवं सरस्वती का अंकन भी प्राप्त होता है

(हंटिंगटन, 1993 / पृ० 412)। इसके अतिरिक्त विष्णु की त्रिविक्रम मूर्तियां राजस्थान के भी कतिपय क्षेत्रों से प्राप्त होती है (अग्रवाल, 1960 / पृ० 56)। मध्य युगीन कला में भी विष्णु के विभिन्न स्वरूपों का अंकन प्राप्त होता है। इस काल की मूर्तियों में विष्णु की चतुर्भुजी किन्तु लम्बी एवं क्षीण काया का निरूपण मिलता है। इन मूर्तियों में कमल पर खडे विष्णु के हाथों पर चक्र एवं शंख शोभित है तथा दाहिना हाथ अभय मुद्रा में तथा बांया कटिहस्त पर है। लंबा किरीट, अलंकृत कटिसूत्र, मुक्ता यज्ञोपवीत एवं उत्तरीय वस्त्रों की बनावट मोहक है (मिश्र, 1978 / पृ० 257)।

उत्तराखण्ड में वैष्णव धर्म का अस्तित्व आद्य–ऐतिहासिक काल से आरम्भ हुआ। इस समय आम जन के अतिरिक्त नरेशों ने भी प्रचार–प्रसार ही नहीं किया, अपितु इसे राजधर्म के रूप में भी मान्यता दी। किन्तु इस धर्म का मूर्तरूप हमें मध्य काल के मंदिरों से प्राप्त होता है। गोपेश्वर (चमोली) स्थित गोपीनाथ मंदिर में सुरक्षित भगवान विष्णु की मूर्ति, सिमली का विष्णु मंदिर, अल्मोडा का मुरलीमनोहर मंदिर एवं देवप्रयाग स्थित राम मंदिर इस श्रृंखला के कुछ प्रमुख मंदिर हैं। इन मंदिरों में विष्णु एवं उनके अवतारों की मूर्तियां प्राप्त होती हैं। उत्तराखण्ड में स्थित सेम–मुखेम क्षेत्र में विष्णु के अवतारों श्रीकृष्ण की नागराजा कहा जाता है तथा सिदुवा–विदुवा की लोकगाथा एवं नागराजा की जागर में श्रीकृष्ण का वर्णन प्राप्त होता है। गढ़वाल क्षेत्र में सेम–मुखेम में गंगू रमोला द्वारा निर्मित नागराजा कृष्ण का प्रसिद्ध मंदिर निर्मित करवाया। जिसमें पगडी पहने हुए वासुदेव की मूर्ति है। यहाँ पर नाग के रूप में कृष्ण की पूजा होती है। इसके अतिरिक्त भगवान विष्णु के एक और अवतार श्रीराम एवं इनसे सम्बन्धित देवी–देवताओं का वर्णन भी प्राप्त होता है। राम रावण वध के पश्चात् ब्रह्महत्या के निवारणार्थ सीता एवं लक्ष्मण सहित देवप्रयाग में गंगा–भागीरथी के संगम पर तपस्या करने आये थे, जिसका वर्णन केदारखण्ड में इस प्रकार मिलता है।

पुनर्देवप्रयागे वै यत्रास्ते देव भूसुरः।
आययौ भगवान विष्णु रामरूपात्मकः स्वयम् ।।

(केदारखण्ड 150 / 80–81)

इसी प्रकार राम द्वारा भगवान शिव की सहस्र कमलों से कमलेश्वर मंदिर, श्रीनगर गढ़वाल में पूजा किये जाने का वर्णन प्राप्त होता है (केदारखण्ड, 188 / 88)। प्रतिमा के रूप में विष्णु की मूर्तियों का निर्माण गुप्तकाल से प्रारम्भ हो चुका था। विष्णु की प्रतिमाकंन में उनके सिर पर किरीट, कानों में कुण्डल, हाथों में कंकण, भुजाओं पर केयूर, गले में कण्ठहार, वक्षस्थल पर वनमाला को दिखाया गया है। इसके अतिरिक्त उनके आयुधों में शंख, चक्र, पदम्, एवं गदा, का अंकन प्राप्त होता है। इन आयुधों का परवर्ती काल में मानवीय रुप में अंकन प्राप्त होता है। उत्तराखण्ड में भगवान विष्णु का अंकन प्राप्त स्थानक, आसन एवं शयन तीनों मुद्राओं में प्राप्त होता है। जिसमें शेषशायी विष्णु, ललितासनस्थ विष्णु, वैकुण्ठरुप, नृसिंह रुप, लक्ष्मीनारायण वराहरुप आदि का अंकन मिलता है। उत्तराखण्ड में स्थित विष्णु की विशिष्ट प्रतिमाएँ इस प्रकार है।

शेषशायी प्रतिमाएँ :–

विष्णु की शेषशायी या अनन्तशायी प्रतिमाए गुप्तकाल में निर्मित हुई हैं। इन मूर्ति में विष्णु को शेषनाग के सिंहासन पर स्थित दिखाया गया है। क्षीर–समुद्र में शेषशायी विष्णु का रुप पुराने कई प्रतीकों से सम्पन्न हुआ। वेदों में सृष्टि को आपः–समुद्रम–सलिलम् या जल से उत्पन्न कहा गया है तथा सृष्टि के पालनकर्त्ता विष्णु को क्षीर सागर में निवास करने वाला वताया गया है। इस रुप में वह सृष्टि में व्याप्त होने

से विष्णु है। वह सृष्टि या ब्रहमाण्ड से अवशिष्ट रहते हुए उससे ही उच्छिष्ट या शेष जो अज्ञात शक्ति का प्रतीक अनन्त सर्प है। असीम् विष्णु का अनन्त शेष आधार है। यही शेषशायी विष्णु मूर्ति का अभिप्राय है (अग्रवाल, 1995/पृ० 341)। शेषशायी प्रतिमा में उसको दायीं से बायीं ओर लेटे हुए, सिर के नीचे रखे हुए हाथ में पदम तथा अन्य हाथों में क्रमशः शंख, चक्र एवं गदा का अंकन प्राप्त होता है। इसके अतिरिक्त किरीट मुकुट, कर्णकुंडल, एकावलि ग्रेवेयक, बाजूबन्द, कंकण, माला, कटिसूत्र और वनमाला से अंलकृत किया हुआ है। इनके नाभिकमल पर ब्रहमा का अंकन तथा लक्ष्मी को उनके दायें पैर की ओर बैठा हुआ दिखाया गया है (शर्मा, 2008/पृ० 139)।

भगवान विष्णु की शेषशायी/अनन्तशायी प्रतिमाएँ मध्य हिमालय के बैजनाथ द्वारहाट से प्राप्त हुई है। इन प्रतिमाओं में विष्णु को शेषनाग की कुंडली पर उसके विस्तृत फनों के नीचे विश्राम करते हुए रुपायित किया है। इन मूर्तियों में विष्णु की शेषशायी रुप प्रतिमा के सभी अलंकरणों का निरुपण के साथ–साथ पाद पीठ पर समुद्र के निरुपण में मछलियों एवं मगरमच्छों को भी उकेरा गया है (नौटियाल, 1969/पृ० 156)। इसके अतिरिक्त मध्य हिमालय में जोशीमठ, पांडुकेश्वर, आदिवदरी, सिमली, देवलगढ, पौडी, सुमाडी, उत्तरकाशी, अल्मोडा, वागेश्वर, पिथौरागढ, आदि स्थानों से भी इस प्रकार की प्रतिमाएँ प्राप्त हुई हैं (शर्मा, 2008)।

वैकुण्ठरुप प्रतिमा :–

विष्णु की वैकुण्ठरूप प्रतिमाए गुप्तयुगीन कलाधारा के साथ सर्वप्रथम मथुरा कला केन्द्र में विकसित हुई इसके पश्चात् इसका विभिन्न क्षेत्रों में प्रसार हुआ (मिश्र, 1978/पृ० 217)। भारतीय कला में निरुपित विष्णु की वैकुण्ठ मूर्तियों की लोकप्रियता यशोवर्मन के खजुराहो लेख से स्पष्टतः दृष्टिगोचर होता है (एपीग्राफिया इंडिका, 1/पृ० 125–129)। वैकुण्ठ मूर्तियों में विष्णु के शिल्पशास्त्रीय परम्परा के अनुसार तीन तथा यदा–कदा चार मुखों का अंकन प्राप्त होता है। इन मूर्तियों में विष्णु के सौम्य मुख के पार्श्वो में वराह और नृसिंह मुख का अंकन प्राप्त होता है। इसके अतिरिक्त कुछ मूर्तियों में चतुर्थ मुख के रुप में कपिल मुख का पीछे की और प्रतिमांकन मिलता है। जिसका सम्बन्ध विष्णु के अनिरुद्ध व्यूह से है। किन्तु यदा–कदा कपिल मुख विष्णु के हयग्रीव स्वरुप को भी सूचित करता है (एपीग्राफिया इंडिका/पृ० 21–22)। विष्णु की वैकुण्ठ मूर्तियों में उनके आयुधों में खड़ग, हल–मूसल, शंख, चक्र, खेटक आदि दिखाये गये हैं (शर्मा, 2008/पृ० 140)।

मध्य हिमालय के गढ़वाल क्षेत्र में ही केवल इस प्रकार की मूर्तियों प्राप्त हुई है। प्रो० नौटियाल (1969/पृ० 164) ने पलेठी के भानु मंदिर में विष्णु की वैकुण्ठ मूर्तियों का उल्लेख किया है। प्रो० नौटियाल के अनुसार में प्रतिमाएँ गर्भगृह में प्रतिष्ठित लगभग 67 सें०मी० ऊँची हैं। इस प्रतिमा में विष्णु को पद्महस्त एवं वरद् मुद्रा में दिखाया गया है। इस प्रकार की प्रतिमाएँ सिमली, चमोली एवं कंडारदेव मंदिर, उत्तरकाशी से प्राप्त कांस्य प्रतिमा हुई है।

लक्ष्मीनारायण मूर्ति :–

विष्णु की विभिन्न रुपों को प्रतिमा शास्त्रीय आधार पर मूर्त रुप में अंकन किया गया है। लक्ष्मीनारायण मूर्ति में विष्णु के साथ–साथ लक्ष्मी का भी अंकन मिलता है। जिसमें पुरुष–प्रकृति का भाव मूर्त किया गया अर्थात् श्रीलक्ष्मी को विष्णु पत्नी के रुप में यह रुपांकन किया गया है। इस प्रतिमा में लक्ष्मी के अतिरिक्त गरुड या सुपर्ण का भी विष्णु प्रतिमा में सन्निवेश हुआ है, जिसके कारण ही विष्णु की

लक्ष्मीनारायण प्रतिमाएँ दो मुद्राओं यथा स्थानक एवं गरुड़ासनासीन में प्राप्त होती हैं। मध्य हिमालय में इस प्रकार की मूर्तियां गढ़वाल के श्रीनगर, देवलगढ़, सुमाड़ी नारायणवगढ़ तथा कुमॉऊ में अल्मोंडा, बैंजनाथ, पिथौरागढ़ आदि मंदिरों से प्राप्त होती है (शर्मा, 2008 / पृ० 141)।

पोखरी, जिला चमोली में लक्ष्मीनारायण मूर्ति के प्रमाण हमें चमेठी के चण्डी देवी मंदिर एवं देवस्थान मंदिर से प्राप्त होते हैं। चण्डी देवी मंदिर, चमेठी इस मूर्ति में भगवान विष्णु के पार्श्व में देवी लक्ष्मी को दिखाया गया है। भगवान विष्णु को किरीट कुण्डल आदि तथा लक्ष्मी को विभिन्न आभूषणों से सुसज्जित दिखाया गया है तथा विष्णु के आयुधों को भी प्रतिमा में दिखाया गया है। देवस्थान मंदिर मूर्ति में भगवान विष्णु के गले में वनमाला का अंकन प्राप्त होता है। उसके आयुधों में क्रमशः शंख, चक्र, गदा, पद्म आदि का अंकन मिलता है। इस मूर्ति में महत्त्वपूर्ण यह है कि वाहय पटटी पर विष्णु के विभिन्न अवतारों का भी अंकन प्राप्त होता है।

अवतार सम्वद्ध मूर्तियां :–

विष्णु की इन मूर्तियों की कल्पना में मत्स्य, कूर्म, वराह नृसिंह, वामन, परशुराम, राम, श्रीकृष्ण, बुद्ध एवं कल्की के रुप में हुई है। विष्णु के विशुद्ध मानवीय स्वरुप को छोड़ते हुए उनके पांच प्रतीकों यथा मत्स्य, कूर्म, वराह, नृसिंह एवं वामन का महत्त्वपूर्ण स्थान है। इन स्वरूपों की पूजा प्राचीन काल से चली आ रही है। विष्णु के इन रुपों में धार्मिकता में पिरोया हुआ वैज्ञानिक स्वरूप स्पष्टतः दृष्टिगोचर होती है। वैज्ञानिकता के अनुसार पृथ्वी में जीवन की उत्पत्ति सर्वप्रथम पानी में एक कोशकीय जीवों से हुई, तथा इसके पश्चात् ही बहुकोशकीय जलचरों की उत्पत्ति हुई। वैष्णव धर्म में विष्णु के अवतारों की संकल्पना भी इसी प्रकार प्राप्त होती है। विष्णु के सर्वप्रथम अवतार मत्स्य है, जो कि एक जलीय जीव है। वैज्ञानिकों के अनुसार पृथ्वी पर पूर्ण जलीय जीवों के पश्चात् ऐसे जीवों की उत्पत्ति हुई जो जल एवं थल दोनों स्थानों पर जीवनयापन कर सकते थे। विष्णु का कूर्म अवतार इस स्वरुप की अभिव्यक्ति है। तत्पश्चात् वैज्ञानिक संकल्पना में पूर्णतः थलीय जीवन की उत्पत्ति सम्भव हुई, जो कि विष्णु के वराह अवतार द्वारा पूर्ण होता है। वैज्ञानिकों के अनुसार मानव की उत्पत्ति कपियों में एक विशिष्ट म्यूटेशन के द्वारा सम्भव हुआ, यह हमें विष्णु के नृसिंह अवतार में स्पष्ट रुप से दृष्टिगोचर होती है, जिसमें उनका शरीर मानव का एवं मुँह शेर का है। इसके पश्चात् ही उनका मानवीय स्वरुप वामन (वौना) अवतार प्रकट होता है तथा विशुद्ध मानवीय रुप परशुराम, राम, कृष्ण आदि का प्रादुर्भाव होता है।

भगवान विष्णु की अन्य प्रतिमाओं के साथ–साथ उनके अवतारों का भी प्रतिमांकन पाया जाता है। इन अवतारों में देवगढ़ के दशावतार मंदिर में वराह अवतार का अंकन जिसमें वराह द्वारा पृथ्वी को अपने टस्क से सुरक्षित किया गया था। विष्णु का त्रिविक्रम मूर्ति मध्य हिमालय में नैनीताल जिले के काशीपुर से प्राप्त हुई है (शर्मा, 2008 / पृ० 142)। जिसे विष्णु का पांचवा अवतार माना गया है तथा यह एक वौने ब्राहमण का रुप है। भगवान विष्णु की नृसिंह प्रतिमा मध्य हिमालय में जोशीमठ के वासुदेव मंदिर से प्राप्त होती है। इन अवतार मूर्तियों के अतिरिक्त मध्य हिमालय में श्रीकृष्ण, राम आदि की मूर्तियां भी प्राप्त होती है। भगवान विष्णु के अवतार प्रतिमाओं के अतिरिक्त विभिन्न सहचारी पार्श्वदेवता का भी वैष्णव धर्म में महत्त्वपूर्ण स्थान है। इन सहचारी देवताओं में गरुड़, हनुमान, बलराम आदि आते हैं। मध्य हिमालय से गरुड़ का प्रतिमांकन सुमाड़ी (श्रीनगर), बैजनाथ एवं आदिबद्री आदि से तथा हनुमान का मूर्त रुप इस क्षेत्र के लगभग सभी स्थानों से प्राप्त होता है (नौटियाल 1969 / पृ० 192)।

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प्राचीन कालीन भारतीय नृत्यकला एवं वैदिक साहित्य

डॉ० सुषमा देवी गुप्ता*

प्राचीन भारत में लोगों का जीवन वर्तमान कालीन जीवन की अपेक्षा अधिक सुखमय था। तत्कालीन लोगों को जीवन–संग्राम में हम लोगों की भाँति अधिक व्यस्त नहीं रहना पड़ता था। ऐसी परिस्थिति में लोगों ने समय–समय पर आनन्द की सृष्टि के लिए मनोविनोद के रूप में कलाओं का विकास किया था। यूँ तो दैनिक जीवन में मनोविनोद को स्थान मिला ही था, किन्तु उसका विषद रूप पारिवारिक उत्सवों, संस्कार, अभिषेक आदि के अवसर पर दिखाई पड़ता था। भारतीय प्रकृति ने भी मनोविनोद के अभ्युदय में सहयोग दिया है। वह सभी ऋतुओं में अपनी नित्य नूतन सुषमा के द्वारा मानव–हृदय को प्रफुल्लित एवं उल्लासित करके आनन्द मनाने के लिए प्रेरित करती है।

प्रकृति के अन्य प्राणधारियों की अपेक्षा मानव अधिक विनोद–प्रिय है। यद्यपि संस्कृति की प्रगति के साथ ही मनोविनोद के लिये नित्य नवीन साधनों का उदय हुआ है, तथापि इतना तो निश्चयपूर्वक कहा जा सकता है कि प्राचीन काल में मनोविनोद की मात्रा आधुनिक युग से अधिक ही थी। कारण प्रत्यक्ष है – मनोविनोद के लिये जिन परिस्थितियों का होना आवश्यक है, वे प्राचीन युग में आज की अपेक्षा अतिशय मात्रा में वर्तमान थीं। नागरिकों की निश्चिन्त मनोवृत्ति, समृद्धिशालिता तथा प्रकृति की रमणीयता आदि मनोविनोद की अभिवृद्धि के लिये अपेक्षित है।

प्राचीन काल में इनका बाहुल्य तथा वर्तमान काल में अभाव सा दिखाई देता है। समाज का मनोविनोद करने के लिए राजा, समृद्धिशाली नागरिक तथा कथावाचक आचार्य अपनी ओर से नित्य नवीन योजनाएं बनाकर उन्हें कार्यान्वित करने में अपने जीवन की सफलता मानते थे।[1] तत्कालीन लोगों ने भी अपने धन के सदुपयोग की दिशा में सार्वजनिक मनोविनोद के साधनों को प्रस्तुत करना पुण्य एवं यश का कार्य माना था।

प्राचीन काल के नागरिक व्यक्तित्व के विकास के लिए अभिनय, नृत्य, संगीत, काव्य आदि कलाओं का ज्ञान एवं अभ्यास आवश्यक मानते थे। कुछ लोग तो वंशानुक्रम से मनोविनोद सम्बन्धी कलाओं एवं विद्याओं को सीखते थे। ऐसे वर्गों में गन्धर्व, किन्नर, सूत, चारण, मागध, नट, वेण, मैत्रेयक, मल्ल, झल्ल, नट, गणिका आदि सुप्रसिद्ध रहे हैं।[2] कापालिक धर्म के अनुयायी इन्द्रजाल द्वारा मनोरंजन करते थे। सभी धार्मिक अनुष्ठानों में नृत्यादि की प्रतिष्ठा हो चुकी थी।

वैदिक काल से ही उपर्युक्त मनोरंजनों के अतिरिक्त जलक्रीड़ा, काव्यमय विनोद, (नाटक, कथा, कहानी एवं कविता–पाठ आदि) मृगया यानि शिकार, कन्दुक–क्रीड़ा, इन्द्रजाल, द्यूत–क्रीड़ा (जुआ) आदि का प्रचार हुआ। इन सभी मनोविनोदों में नाटकों को सभ्य–समाज ने सर्वप्रथम स्थान दिया है।

यद्यपि प्राचीनकाल से ही नाटक मनोरंजन का सर्वप्रथम साधन रहा है तथापि नाटक के सौन्दर्य की वृद्धि करने वाले नृत्य ने भी प्राचीन काल से ही अपना महत्त्वपूर्ण पृथक् स्थान बनाये रखा है। मनावेतर प्राणियों में मयूर का नृत्य सदा ही मनोरम रहा है। विनोद–प्रिय मानव ने मयूर का नृत्य संस्कृति के आदि काल से ही चावपूर्वक देखा है। वह स्वयं कब नृत्य करने लगा यह निश्चयपूर्वक नहीं कहा जा सकता। आजकल की वन में रहने वाली अर्धसभ्य जातियों के नृत्यों को देखने से प्रतीत होता है कि संसार के प्रायः

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सभी भूभागों में सुदूर प्राचीनकाल से ही लोगों के अपने–अपने नृत्य रहे हैं। उनके नृत्य की उत्पत्ति एवं विकास उनकी निजी संस्कृति तथा प्रवृत्तियों का परिचायक माना जा सकता है। नवीन प्रस्तर–युग में कुछ चित्रों में तत्कालीन नर्तकों के नृत्यों की झलक अब भी मिलती है।

प्राचीनतम नृत्य की स्पष्ट रूप–रेखा का परिचय सिन्धु–सभ्यता के अवशेषों में प्राप्त होता है। मोहनजोदड़ो से प्राप्त एक नर्तकी की मूर्ति (4½") रुचिर एवं भावयुक्त है। उसके पैरों का भाग टूटा हुआ है। दाहिना हाथ लताहस्त या कटयवलम्बित मुद्रा में है। बाहुओं में कटकावली या बंगड़ी भरी हुई हैं जिन्हें ऋग्वेद में "खादयः" कहा है। सिर एक ओर को कुछ झुका हुआ है तथा उस पर घुंघराले बाल हैं, जिनका पीछे की ओर जूड़ा बंधा हुआ है। आँखें बड़ी एवं अधमुंदी सी हैं। लम्बी टांगों एवं भुजाओं के साथ सूक्ष्म कटि की मुद्रा सूचित करती है कि यह नृत्यकला में चिर–अभ्यस्त किसी नर्तकी की मूर्ति है।[3] इनके अतिरिक्त नर्तकों की भी दो मूर्तियाँ तथा कुछ मुद्राओं पर अंकन मिले हैं। तत्कालीन नृत्य में हाव–भाव की अभिव्यक्ति की जाती थी तथा अंगों का विक्षेप ताल एवं लय का आश्रय लेकर होता था, जैसा कि उनके पद की स्थिति से ज्ञात होता है। एक ताबीज़ के अंकन से ज्ञात होता है कि नृत्य के साथ–साथ बाजे भी बजाए जाते थे। उस समय अनेक लोग समूह में भी नृत्य करते थे।[4]

वैदिक काल में नृत्य कला :–

वैदिक युग में कलाओं के अस्तित्व की व्यापक सूचनाएं उपलब्ध हैं। उस युग में कलाओं के वाहक एवं प्रवर्तक तीन प्रकार के कलाकारों का पता चलता है, जिनके नाम हैं – गायक, वादक एवं नर्तक। कलाकारों की ये तीन श्रेणियां पर्याप्त उन्नति पर थीं। संगीत एवं नृत्य का विशेष आयोजन होता था। उनमें पुरुष नर्तकों के अतिरिक्त महिला नर्तकियां भी भाग लेती थीं।

वाचस्पति गैरोला के अनुसार वैदिक–कालीन 'समन' नामक उत्सव का अपना ऐतिहासिक महत्त्व है। यह उत्सव रात्रि में आयोजित होता था। संगीत–नृत्य के लिए रात्रिकाल ही उपयुक्त माना जाता था। इसलिए उनका आयोजन अधिकतर रात्रि में ही किया जाता था। इस उत्सव में कुमारियां स्वेच्छानुसार अपने लिए वर का चुनाव करती थीं। इस कारण उसमें युवक भी बड़े उत्साह के साथ भाग लेते थे। इस उत्सव में घुड़दौड़ और संगीत–नृत्य की प्रतियोगिताएँ होती थीं। कुमारियों की संगीत–नृत्य में दक्षता परखी जाती थी। युवक अपने कला–चातुर्य का प्रमाण देते थे। यही 'समन' नामक उत्सव आगे चलकर 'समज्जा' के नाम से प्रचलित हुआ तथा महाभारत काल में उसने बड़ी लोकप्रियता प्राप्त की। इस प्रकार नृत्य–संगीत आदि कलाओं को तब राष्ट्रीय सम्मान प्राप्त था।[5]

वैदिक काल में गायन–वादन के साथ ही नृत्यकला के प्रति विशेष अभिरुचि का पता चलता है। नर्तकियां अपने पैरों में घुंघरू बांधकर सार्वजनिक रूप में अपने नृत्य का प्रदर्शन करती थीं। सोमरस का पान कर पुरुष–स्त्रियां सामूहिक रूप में नृत्य में भाग लेते थे, जिससे तत्कालीन समाज में नृत्य–कला की लोकप्रियता का सहज ही पता चलता है। नृत्य के विभिन्न प्रकार यथा – **रज्जु नृत्य, सलिल नृत्य, अरुण नृत्य, प्रकृति नृत्य, पुष्प नृत्य तथा वसन्त नृत्य आदि** से भी **'नृत्य–कला'** की लोकप्रियता सिद्ध होती है।[6] वेदों में इस प्रकार की प्रचुर सामग्री सुरक्षित है जिससे तत्कालीन समाज की संगीत–नृत्य प्रियता का पता चलता है।

ऋग्वेद में नृत्यकला – ऋग्वेद के **'उषस सूक्त'** में उशा सम्बन्धी एक मन्त्र में नर्तकी की श्रेष्ठता ध्वनित होती है। ऋग्वेद के प्रथम मण्डल में कहा गया है कि उशा नर्तकी के समान विविध रूपों को धारण करती तथा गौ के समान स्तन प्रकट कर देती है। वह समस्त लोकों के लिए प्रकाश से भरती एवं अन्धकार मिटाती है। इससे सिद्ध होता है कि समाज में नृत्य की अच्छी प्रतिष्ठा थी।[7] ऋग्वेद तथा अथर्ववेद से ज्ञात होता है कि नृत्य के साथ आघाटि (झाल) नामक वाद्य की संगति होती थी।[8] साथ ही ऋग्वेद से यह भी विदित होता है कि नृत्य का प्रचलन केवल मानव समाज में ही नहीं था, देवताओं के बीच भी नृत्य का प्रचार था। ऋग्वेद के प्रथम, द्वितीय, पंचम एवं दशम मण्डलों में नृत्य तथा वाद्यों का उल्लेख हुआ है।[9] इनमें से एक ऋचा की व्याख्या करते हुए सायणाचार्य ने नाचते हुए देवताओं का उल्लेख किया है।[10]

यजुर्वेद में नृत्यकला– शुक्ल यजुर्वेद की **"वाजसनेयि संहिता"** के **"पुरुष सूक्त"** में कहा गया है कि शैलूष जाति के लोग व्यावसायिक दृष्टि से नाटकों का आयोजन किया करते थे। इस प्रसंग में कहा गया है कि यज्ञ के विभिन्न अवसरों एवं क्रियाओं पर नृत्त (ताल–लयबद्ध अभिनय) के लिए सूत को, गीत के लिए शैलूष (नट) को, धर्म–व्यवस्था के लिए सभाचतुर को, मनोरंजन के लिए विनोदशीलों (मसखरों) को, शृंगार–रचना (साज–सज्जा) के लिए कलाकारों (निर्देशकों) को, समय–यापन के लिए राजकुमारों को तथा धैर्ययुक्त कार्यों के लिए बढ़ई को नियुक्त करना चाहिए।[11] इस उद्धरण में नृत्यकला के प्रायः सभी तत्त्व विद्यमान हैं। इससे ऐसा प्रतीत होता है कि वैदिक–युगीन समाज में नृत्यकला का व्यापक प्रचार–प्रसार हुए बिना इस प्रकार की प्रामाणिक एवं विस्तृत सूचनाओं का वेद मंत्रों में सन्निवेश होना सम्भव नहीं था। इस उल्लेख से यह भी ज्ञात होता है कि यज्ञों के समय नृत्त–गीत के लिए सूतों एवं शैलूषों को नियुक्त किया जाता था। इस सामग्री के अनुशीलन से पता चलता है कि समाज में कलाओं एवं कलाकारों की पृथक्–पृथक् श्रेणियां बन चुकी थीं। तत्कालीन समाज 'नृत्त–गीत' के अंगों से सुपरिचित हो चुका था। कुछ यज्ञों के अवसर पर "वंश–नर्ती–नृत्य" का आयोजन होता था। इसमें नर्तक बांस का सहारा लेकर नाचता था।[12]

अथर्ववेद में नृत्यकला– अथर्ववेद में भी **'वैदिक युग'** में नृत्य की लोकप्रियता का परिचय उपलब्ध होता है। अथर्ववेद के एक मन्त्र से 'हंस' (हास्य) के साथ नृत्त का उल्लेख हुआ है,[13] जिससे ज्ञात होता है कि नृत्त के साथ हास्य या विनोद का भी सम्मिश्रण था। इसी अर्थ में 'नृति' (नाचना) शब्द भी आया है एवं 'नृत्य' तथा 'हास्य' में अग्रणी होने का वर्णन है।[14] राष्ट्र प्रेम की उत्कट भावना से प्रेरित अथर्ववेद के "पृथिवी सूक्त" के एक मन्त्र में गायन एवं नृत्य का उल्लेख हुआ है। इस मन्त्र में भूतल के मनुष्यों द्वारा नृत्य–गीतों के मनोहर आयोजन का उललेख करते हुए लिखा है – "जिस पृथ्वी पर मनुष्य नाचते–गाते हैं।" इसी मन्त्र में विविध रागों में गाने वाले के लिए "व्यैलब" शब्द दिया गया है।[15] एक मन्त्र में मकान के चारों ओर घूमकर नाचने का वर्णन है।[16] दुन्दुभि को सम्बोधन करके कहा गया है कि वह शत्रुओं के धन पर नाचे[17] अर्थात् हे युद्ध जीतने वाली दुंदभी! तू कल्याणी, धन जीतने वाली, मन्त्र से तीक्ष्ण की हुई एवं बलवती है। जैसे अधिशवण काल में पर्वत अपने लघु खण्डों को दबाता हुआ नाचता है वैसे ही तू शत्रुओं के धन पर अधिकार करती हुई नृत्य कर। स्त्रियों एवं क्लीब (नपुंसक, हिजड़ा) को नाचने वाला बताया गया है। मच्छरों के नाचने की उपमा हिजड़ों के नृत्य से दी गई है।[18] **'काठक–संहिता'** में भी नृत्य–संगीत एवं नर्तकों–गायकों का उल्लेख हुआ है।

वेदों की ही भाँति "ब्राह्मण ग्रन्थों", "आरण्यकों", "उपनिषदों" एवं "षड़वेदांगों" में भी नृत्य–संगीत सम्बन्धित सामग्री बिखरी हुई है। "तैत्तिरीय–ब्राह्मण" में "आयोग", "मागध", "सूत", "शैलूष" आदि कलाकारों के नाम देखने को मिलते हैं। इस सन्दर्भ में नृत्य के साथ "वीणा" बजाये जाने का भी उल्लेख हुआ है।[19]

इन उल्लेखों से ज्ञात होता है कि वैदिक युग में कलाकारों एवं कलाओं का एक निश्चित स्थान बन चुका था। उस युग के समाज का जो स्वरूप संहिताओं एवं परवर्ती वैदिक साहित्य में देखने को मिलता है, उससे यह भी विदित होता है कि परमार्थ प्राप्ति के साधनों में कला को भी एक साधन माना गया था। इस प्रकार कला न केवल ऐहिक जीवन के मनोविनोद एवं मनोरंजन तक ही सीमित थी, अपितु उसे धर्म अध्यात्म एवं परमार्थ–प्राप्ति का भी माध्यम माना जाता था।

कला की आध्यात्मिक पृष्ठभूमि में उसकी लोकोन्मुखी प्रवृत्तियां भी अपना स्वतंत्र विकास कर रही थीं। यद्यपि वह धर्म के सुनहरे तन्तुओं से परिवेष्ठित थीं, तथापि उसे सभी दिशाओं में आगे बढ़ने की स्वतंत्रता प्राप्त थी। उसकी इन लोकोन्मुखी प्रवृत्तियों का परिचय "कौषीतकी–ब्राह्मण" (24/5) के उस प्रसंग से मिलता है, जिसमें कलाओं की विस्तृत सूची प्रस्तुत की गई है। इस सूची को देखकर तत्कालीन जन–जीवन में कला के सहज प्रवेश का स्पष्ट पता चलता है। इस सूची में जिन कलाओं का उल्लेख किया गया है, उनमें नृत्य–संगीत का भी नाम है।[20] नृत्य, गीत एवं वाद्य, तीनों को तब शिल्प के अन्तर्गत माना जाता था वैदिक युग में शिल्प का व्यापक अर्थ में प्रयोग होता था। कौषीतकी–ब्राह्मण के एक प्रसंग में शिल्प के तीन भेद बताये गये हैं – नृत्य, गीत एवं वाद्य।[21] वैदिकोत्तर काल रामायण, महाभारत आदि में भी "शिल्प" शब्द को इसी अर्थ में ग्रहण किया गया है।

वाचस्पति गैरोला के अनुसार वैदिक–साहित्य के अन्तिम अंग "षड्वेदांगों" के समय समाज में कुछ परिवर्तन हुआ। "शिक्षा", "कल्प", "व्याकरण", "निरुक्त", "छन्द" एवं "ज्योतिष" वैदिक ज्ञान की इन शाखाओं के उन्नायक बुद्धिजीवी एवं विचारक अधिक थे। समाज में भी इनका प्रभाव परिलक्षित होता है। कल्प–सूत्रों के निर्माणक समाज का एक वर्ग अधिकार प्राप्ति एवं पद–श्रेष्ठता के प्रति अधिक सजग दिखाई देता है। इस वर्ग ने समाज में ऊँच–नीच के भेद भावों को फैलाकर वर्ग–संघर्ष को जन्म दिया तथा कलाओं के उपयोग एवं प्रयोग पर भी कुछ प्रतिबन्ध लगाये। साथ ही यह व्यवस्था दी कि नृत्य–गीत आदि कलाओं में द्विजातियों को सम्मिलित होना वर्जित है।[22]

आगे चलकर स्मृतिकारों ने कल्प सूत्रकारों के इन विधानों को उसी रूप में अंगीकृत किया। उसके कारण नट, नर्तक एवं गायक आदि कलाकारों को निम्न श्रेणी में परिगणित किया जाने लगा। धर्मग्रन्थों के इन प्रतिबन्धों एवं प्रतिषेधों के बावजूद भी नृत्य–संगीत आदि कलाओं की जो धारा वेदों के स्त्रोत से वही थी, वह अबाध गीत से निरन्तर आगे बढ़ती रही तथा समाज के सभी वर्गों ने उसको उसी चाव–भाव से अपनाया।[23]

वेदों एवं वैदिक साहित्य के अध्येता मैक्समूलर, लेवी एवं ओल्देनवर्ग प्रभृति पाश्चात्य विद्वानों ने ऋग्वेद के सम्वाद–सूक्तों के आधार पर नाट्य की उत्पत्ति सिद्ध की है। वेद मन्त्रों में बिखरी हुई सामग्री का अध्ययन–अनुशीलन कर डॉ० एस० एन० दासगुप्ता ने भी यह सिद्ध किया है कि तत्कालीन जन–जीवन में धार्मिक अवसरों पर बड़े–बड़े समारोह आयोजित हुआ करते थे, जिसमें नृत्य–संगीत के साथ नाटकों का भी अभिनय हुआ करता था।[24]

इस प्रकार वैदिक साहित्य के सूक्ष्म अनुशीलन से स्पष्ट हो जाता है कि वैदिक काल में नृत्य कला को सामाजिक जीवन में अत्यधिक महत्त्वपूर्ण स्थान प्राप्त था।

पादटिप्पणियाँ

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   हिरण्यशिप्रः मरूतो दविध्वतः पृक्षं या थ पृक्षतीभिः समन्यवः।। 13
   पपृक्षेण्यमिन्द्रत्वे ह्योजो नृम्णानि च नृतमानो अमर्तः।
   स न एनीं वसवानो रयिं दाः प्रार्यः स्तुशे तुविमघस्य दानम्।। 6

इदं यमस्य सादनं देवमानं यदुच्यते।
इयमस्य धभ्ये नाळीरयं गीर्भिः परिश्कृतः।। 7
ऋग्वेद, मण्डल–1, सूक्त–28, मन्त्र–5, मण्डल–2, सूक्त–34, एवं 43
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10. भारतीय नाट्य परम्परा और अभिनय दर्पण, पृष्ठ–116
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12. यजुर्वेद की वाजसनेयि–संहिता, अध्याय–30, मन्त्र–31, तैत्तिरीय–ब्राह्मण,3.4.17.1,
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हसो नरिश्टा नृत्तानि शरीरयनु प्राविशन।। अथर्ववेद, काण्ड–11, सूक्त–8, मन्त्र–24
14. प्रा\चो अगाय नृतये हसाय। सुवीरासो विदथमा वदेम्।।
अथर्ववेद, काण्ड–12, सूक्त–2, मन्त्र–22
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17. श्रेयःकेतो वसुजित सहीयान्त्संग्रामजित् संशितो ब्रह्मणासि।
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19. तैत्तिरीय ब्राह्मण, 3.4.1.15
20. कौषीतकी ब्राह्मण, 24–5
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24. भारतीय नाट्य परम्परा और अभिनय दर्पण, पृष्ठ–118

Lady writing a letter, Kangra, 1800 AD

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